

# The Color of Tea

by Hannah Tunnicliffe

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## About the Book

*Macau: the bulbous nose of China, a peninsula and two islands strung together like a three-bead necklace. It was time to find a life for myself. To make something out of nothing. The end of hope and the beginning of it too.*

After moving with her husband to the tiny, bustling island of Macau, Grace Miller finds herself a stranger in a foreign land --- a lone redhead towering above the crowd on the busy Chinese streets. As she is forced to confront the devastating news of her infertility, Grace's marriage is fraying and her dreams of family have been shattered. She resolves to do something bold, something her impetuous mother would do, and she turns to what she loves: baking and the pleasure of afternoon tea.

Grace opens a café where she serves tea, coffee, and *macarons* --- the delectable, delicate French cookies colored like precious stones --- to the women of Macau. There, among fellow expatriates and locals alike, Grace carves out a new definition of home and family. But when her marriage reaches a crisis, secrets Grace thought she had buried long ago rise to the surface. Grace realizes it's now or never to lay old ghosts to rest and to begin to trust herself. With each mug of coffee brewed, each cup of tea steeped and *macaron* baked, Grace comes to learn that strength can be gleaned from the unlikeliest of places.

A delicious, melt-in-your-mouth novel featuring the sweet pleasures of French pastries and the exotic scents and sights of China, THE COLOR OF TEA is a scrumptious story of love, friendship and renewal.

## Discussion Guide

1. Hannah Tunnicliffe writes beautiful, tactile descriptions of food and the ritual surrounding food. What was your favorite or the most memorable passage about food from *The Color of Tea*? Did Grace's culinary efforts inspire you in any way?
2. What were your initial reactions to Grace and Pete's relationship? How was their relationship impacted by their inability to start a family? Consider how both characters individually reacted to this news. Compare their relationship at the beginning of the novel to the epilogue. What has changed?
3. "I can feel so self-conscious here. So pale and tall. Too foreign. Sometimes it feels like I've been growing more and more foreign over the years." How is Grace's identity and sense of self influenced by her surroundings? How did the setting of Macau propel the narrative's action?
4. Each chapter opens with a description of a decadent macaron: from the "Parisian Crêpe-Inspired Banana with Hazelnut Chocolate Ganache" to "Dragon Fruit Filled with Lemongrass-Spiked Buttercream." How did these descriptions influence your reading?
5. Many of Grace's memories of her mother, her childhood, and her relationship with Pete are connected to food. Why is food such a powerful anchor for Grace? What is your most vivid or favorite memory related to food?
6. "I guess some women have a journal; I have Mama. Ruby-red-haired Mama." Discuss the letters Grace writes to Mama. What does Grace's habit of writing letters that will never be sent tell you about her character? What did these letters reveal about Grace's and Mama's relationship?
7. Discuss the theme of motherhood and how it affects each character in *The Color of Tea*. How does Grace act as a mother figure to Rilla and Gigi? Who does Grace look to as a mother figure or role model? How does Grace eventually come to terms with her relationship with Mama?
8. When Grace meets Linda for the first time, she thinks to herself: "I wish I were better at making girlfriends. Or at least understanding other women. Sometimes it feels like they are speaking another language." Have you ever felt this way? How does Grace's approach to relationships change by the end of the novel? Why are Grace's female friendships so important to her?
9. Discuss the moment in the novel when Grace decides to open her own café. What drove her to this decision? How does Grace's dream of running her own café help her let go of her dream of becoming a mother?
10. Which character are you most alike? Which character do you most admire? Whom do you think you would most likely be friends with?
11. When talking to Rilla about missing Australia and her previous life, Grace thinks to herself: "I hate this enduring need to make out that your life is perfectly blissful. . . . The oily lies and half-truths leave me feeling uncomfortable and queasy." Do you think Grace herself is guilty of her own complaint? Do you think she is completely honest with herself about her own struggles? Why or why not?
12. Discuss Grace's relationship with Léon. Why is Grace so drawn to him? What does he represent? How did you react

to the fight between Pete and Léon at the tennis club? Was Pete's anger justified?

13. Were you surprised by Pete's confession of infidelity? Why or why not?

14. Discuss the scene where Grace finds out that Jocelyn and Rilla have been sleeping at Lillian's. Did you understand why she felt betrayed? In your opinion, did Grace overreact? How does this discovery act as a kind of personal catalyst for Grace?

15. What did you think of the ending of *The Color of Tea*? What has Grace learned from her past? From her mama's mistakes? From her relationships with Rilla, Gigi, and Marjory? Did you have any lingering questions?

## Author Bio

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### **The Color of Tea**

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