ReadingGroupGuides
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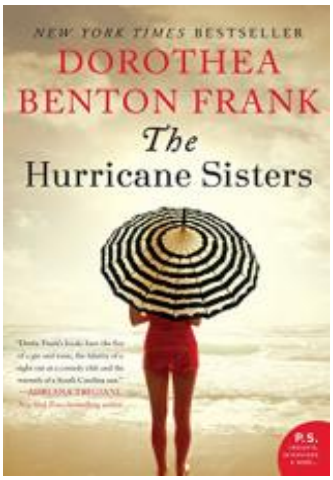
The Hurricane Sisters

by Dorothea Benton Frank



About the Book

Once again Dorothea Benton Frank takes us into the heart of her magical South Carolina Lowcountry on a tumultuous journey filled with longings, disappointments and a road toward happiness that is hard earned.

Three generations of women are buried in secrets. The determined matriarch, Maisie Pringle, at 80, is a force to be reckoned with. Her daughter, Liz, is caught up in the classic maelstrom of being middle-aged and in an emotionally demanding career. And Liz's beautiful twentysomething daughter, Ashley, has dreamy ambitions of her unlikely future that keeps them all at odds.

Mary Beth, Ashley's dearest friend, tries to have her back, but even she can't talk headstrong Ashley out of a relationship with an ambitious politician who seems slightly too old for her. Actually, Ashley and Mary Beth have yet to launch themselves into solvency. So while they wait for the world to discover them, they placate themselves with a harebrained scheme to make money...and threatens to land them in huge trouble with the authorities.

So where is Clayton, Liz's husband? Ashley desperately needs her father's love and attention, but what kind of a parent can he be to Ashley with one foot in Manhattan and the other one planted in indiscretion? And Liz, who's an expert in the field of troubled domestic life, refuses to acknowledge Ashley's precarious situation. The Lowcountry has endured its share of war and bloodshed like the rest of the South, but this storm season we watch Maisie, Liz, Ashley and Mary Beth deal with challenges that demand they face the truth about themselves.

Discussion Guide

1. Describe the relationship between the three generations of women, Ashley, Liz and Maisie.

2. Is their family truly dysfunctional, or are they normal? Are they happy?

3. Why doesn't Liz approve of her mother's relationship with Skipper? Is it scandalous? Why do we allow social disapproval to keep us from who or what we want?

4. Talk about Liz and Clayton's marriage. Is there anything Liz could have done to prevent Clayton's proclivities in New York? Why does he act as he does? What makes him stop? Should Liz forgive him? Are we a society too quick to divorce? Is forgiveness a weakness? How can Clayton regain Liz's trust?

5. Strong women are the heart of Dorothea Benton Frank's novels. Choose three adjectives that describe the women in the book. Explain why you chose each, and use examples from the book.

6. How does Dorothea Benton Frank use the location of her beloved Carolina Lowcountry as a character in the story? How is this family part of the Lowcountry? How much does place define who we are?

7. Abuse is an important theme in the novel. Do you think our society takes this issue seriously enough? How does abuse proliferate? How do their cultural predilections and personal desires blind them to the senator's behavior? What might have happened to Ashley if she didn't have her family behind her?

8. Think about the three generation of women. Have our notions of romantic relationships changed? Use examples from the novel to support your answer.

9. Which character embodies change the most in the novel?

10. Other generations have weathered financial downswings. What makes the experiences of Ashley's generation different? Are their parents wrong to try to dissuade Ashley and her friend from pursuing their dreams? Is it better to pursue what makes you happy or what makes you money? Why do we have to choose?

11. How are these characters reflective of today? Are they anachronistic in any way?

12. Do you have a favorite scene or part of the novel? Share your insights with the group.

13. What did you take away from reading THE HURRICANE SISTERS?

Author Bio

Dorothea Benton Frank was the author of 20 bestselling novels set in the Low Country of South Carolina. She passed away on September 2, 2019 at the age of 67 following a brief struggle with leukemia.

Photo Credit: Debbie Zammit

Critical Praise

?Hidden beneath Frank?s trademark buoyant and breezy Low Country patois is a passionate exposé of South Carolina?s alarming problem with domestic abuse.?

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