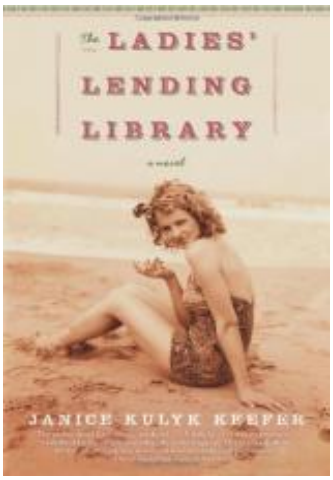
ReadingGroupGuides
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The Ladies' Lending Library

by Janice Kulyk Keefer



About the Book

Cleopatra, showcasing a passion too grand to be contained on the movie screen. The women of the Kalyna Beach cottage community gather for gin and gossip, trading the current racy bestsellers among themselves as they seek a brief escape from the predictable rhythms of children and chores. But dramatic change is coming this summer as innocence falters and the desire for change reaches a boiling point, threatening to disrupt the warm, sweet, heady days and the lives of parents and children, family and friends, forever.

Discussion Guide

1. What does the reaction of the members of the Ladies' Lending Library to the film, *Cleopatra*, and the much-publicized extramarital affair between Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton reveal about the condition of their own marriages?

2. Why does Darka's presence at the Martyn cottage threaten so many of the wives of Kalyna Beach, and how does her presence affect the husbands?

3. How does Laura's obsession with the figure of Cleopatra relate to her own adolescent anxieties?

4. What does Chucha Marta's behavior toward Bonnie reveal about her strengths and weaknesses? To what extent is her portrayal by the author sympathetic?

5. Why does the summer idyll of Kalyna Beach serve as a domestic nightmare for the many spouses who spend their weeks apart and their weekends together?

6. Why do so many ghosts and memories from Ukraine, "the Old Place," pervade the community in **The Ladies' Lending Library**, and how do they affect your appreciation of the issues these characters face as first- and second-

generation immigrants?

7. How does the discovery of Mrs. Shkurka's brutal treatment of her daughter, Anastasia, bring Laura and Sonia closer, and why is that closeness only temporary?

8. How is the seaside setting?with its implicit embrace of physicality and liberation? responsible for the overtly sexual nature of many of the incidents in which the inhabitants of Kalyna Beach find themselves?

9. To what extent does Sasha's fear that Peter Metelsky's relationship with Nadia Senchenko will cause the web of relationships of Kalyna Beach residents to unravel seem likely?

10. How are the themes of sexual desire and longing, wish-fulfillment, and self-denial significant to the plot of **The Ladies' Lending Library**?

Author Bio

Janice Kulyk Keefer is widely acclaimed for her novels, short story collections, poetry, and nonfiction. **The Ladies' Lending Library** is her fifth novel. She lives in Toronto.

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