ReadingGroupGuides
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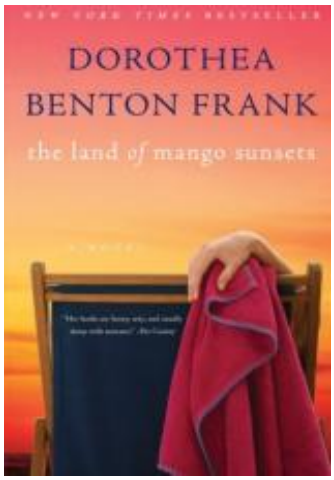
The Land of Mango Sunsets

by Dorothea Benton Frank



About the Book

Her despicable husband left her for a lingerie model who's barely more than a teenager, and her kids are busy with their own lives. But before Miriam Elizabeth Swanson can work herself up into a true snit about it all, her newest tenant, Liz, arrives from Birmingham with plenty of troubles of her own. Then Miriam meets a man named Harrison, who makes her laugh, makes her cry, and makes her feel like a brand-new woman.

It's almost too much for one Manhattan quasi-socialite to handle --- so Miriam's escaping to the enchanted and mysterious land of Sullivans Island, deep in the low country of South Carolina, a place where she can finally get her head on straight --- and perhaps figure out that pride is not what's going to keep her warm at night...

Discussion Guide

1. After her husband leaves her for a younger woman, and her grown sons have little time for her, Miriam throws herself into her charity work. When that is obliterated after her dust-up with Agnes Willis, her mother, Miss Josie, tells her to ?get another life.? Is this good advice? Although it might have had horrible repercussions, telling off Agnes must have been so satisfying. Have you ever been in a situation like that?

2. After many upsetting events, Miriam returns to her mother?s home on Sullivans Island and to its comfort: ?In your old bedroom is the quilt, the same one your grandmother and her friends made just for you when you were a little girl?all that predictability in coming home, that there was a time when you could depend on the fact that you were wanted, missed, welcomed, and really loved by someone who knew you and loved you despite your flaws.? When you think back to your childhood home, what images come up?

3. During their spat, Miss Josie tells Miriam: ?You, my dear daughter, are the cause of your own troubles. Not me.? Do you think she?s correct in her assessment? Has Miriam gotten in her own way?

4. After some self-reflection, Miriam ponders her marriage with Charles: ?Why did I ever so desperately want a man who made me feel like dirt to the point that I sacrificed a minute of time with my children? I swore to myself that if God ever granted me a chance to repair my own heart and to be a worthy mother, I would grab it.? Have you ever looked back on a relationship, romantic or otherwise, and wondered the same thing?

5. When Liz learns her mother is dying, Priscilla urges her to go see her and forgive her: ?When someone?s dying and they ask your forgiveness, it is a greater sin to withhold it. This is no small matter. You have to put your own anger aside and think of her. No matter how she may have hurt you with her own misguided judgment, and I know some of it was terrible, you have to forgive her so she can die in peace.? Do you agree with Miss Josie?s advice? Have you ever been called on to be the bigger person and forgive someone, despite the circumstances?

6. Were you surprised when Manny turned out to be something different than he pretended to be, or did you see red flags? Despite her disappointment, how did her brief time with Manny help Miriam aka Mellie?

7. After the wedding, when her ex-husband Charles tries to reconnect with Mellie, how is she a different woman than the one he left? Even if she did agree to work things out with Charles, do you think she ever would be truly happy with him?

8. Why do you think Mellie is able to enjoy a closer relationship with her two adult sons? What has changed for her? For them?

9. When looking back on her Lowcountry upbringing, Mellie realizes: ?It was there on that island that I learned about the power of deep love and came to believe in magic, only to forget it all later on. But years later, the struggle came to remember, a struggle worth the salt in every tear shed and the blood of every bruise to my spirit.? What great lessons did Mellie take away from her mother and life on the island?

10. What great lessons have you taken away after reading THE LAND OF MANGO SUNSETS?

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

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