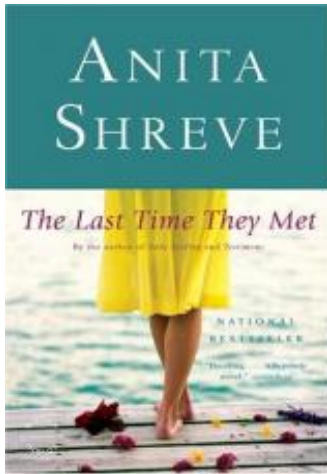

The Last Time They Met: A Novel

by Anita Shreve



About the Book

From the last time Linda and Thomas meet, at a charmless hotel in a distant city, to the moment, thirty-five years earlier, when a chance encounter on a rocky beach binds them fatefully together, this hypnotically compelling novel unfolds a tale of intense passion, drama, and suspense. **The Last Time They Met** is the most accomplished and engrossing novel yet from the author of the #1 bestsellers **The Pilot's Wife** and **Sea Glass**.

Discussion Guide

1. "She peered into the mirror. Tonight she would wear long earrings of pink Lucite. She would put her lenses back in and use a lipstick that didn't clash with the Lucite, and that would be that. Seen from a certain angle, she might simply disappear" (page 8). How would you characterize Linda's self-image at age fifty-two? What events and circumstances in her life have contributed to Linda's sense of self and, in particular, to her impulse toward self-effacement?
2. Speaking about love, Linda says, "I believe it to be the central drama of our lives. For most of us, that is.... It's something extraordinary that happens to ordinary people." Do you agree? To what extent is love the central drama of your life? Of the lives of the people around you?
3. What is the significance of Linda's success as a poet? How does it color Thomas's response to her when they meet again at the writers' festival?
4. Linda and Thomas feel an abiding passion for each other over many years. And yet Linda is also deeply in love with Vincent; her marriage to him was ostensibly happy and of profound importance to her. Do you believe it's possible to be passionately in love with two people at the same time?
5. Discuss Linda's relationship with her children. Do you consider her a good mother? Is there more she could or should

have done to help Marcus? Why does Linda feel that every conversation with one's child, even one's adult child, must be a "mix of truth and lies" (page 58)?

6. Why is Thomas ambivalent about living in Kenya? How and why is his response to Africa different from Linda's? From Regina's?

7. Linda and Thomas have very different family backgrounds. Why is the teenage Thomas immediately drawn to Linda when she walks into his high school English class? Why, soon after, is she drawn to him? Is this a case of opposites attracting?

8. Thomas's most celebrated collection of verse is entitled *The Magdalene Poems*. Why do you think he chose this title?

9. How do you interpret the novel's ending? Identify passages throughout the novel that might have prepared you for what is fully revealed only at the very end of the book.

Author Bio

Anita Shreve was a high school teacher and a freelance magazine journalist before writing fiction full time. She was the author 19 novels, including *THE STARS ARE FIRE* as well as the international bestseller *THE PILOT'S WIFE*, and *THE WEIGHT OF WATER*, a finalist for the Orange Prize. On March 29, 2018, Shreve passed away from cancer at the age of 71.

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