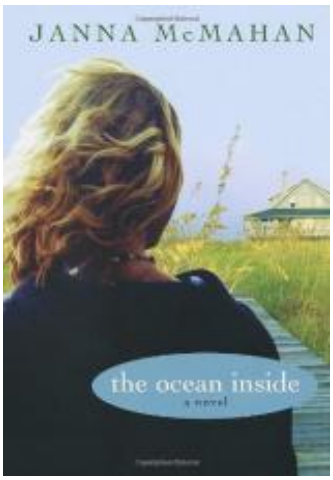
The Ocean Inside

by Janna McMahan



About the Book

Life changes in an instant.

From the acclaimed author of **Calling Home** comes a compelling new novel about the bonds between husband and wife, parents and children, and the strength that lies within us, waiting to be tested. Deeply evocative and beautifully rendered, **The Ocean Inside** explores what it means to hope, to love, and to fight for what matters most?even in the face of overwhelming odds.

Discussion Guide

1. The novel opens with Sloan swimming out into the dark ocean at night. Do you think Sloan does this because she is depressed? Have you ever done something so daring? Did you keep it a secret?

2. Social structure plays an important part in **The Ocean Inside**, from the rich lives of Lafayette Isle to the upper-middle class of Pawleys Island to the residents of Sandy Island. Is our society becoming more divided between the haves and the have-nots?

3. How did you view Lauren?s charity participation and unsuccessful social climbing? Was she shallow, altruistic or simply looking for a purpose for her life?

4. Lauren and Emmett have a traditional division of roles in marriage. Lauren takes care of the home and children. Emmett deals with the financial ends of things. Would they have made a better team if Lauren had more understanding of financial issues? Should Emmett have taken on more responsibility for Ainslie?s health or was he truly overwhelmed with financial obligations? Could more counseling have helped their situation?

5. Pressing to get serious too quickly in a relationship can be an early sign of domestic violence. How could Sloan have been more aware that Cal?s control over her was a type of domestic violence?

6. What do you think happened between Larry and his first wife?

7. Ainslie was a keen observer of how others treated her, from her grandparents taking too many photos to overbearing people at church. How would you have dealt with the child who stared in the pizza restaurant? How would you have insured that Ainslie was included in activities with other children?

8. Ainslie?s health improved and she lived happily ever after. Some of us won?t be so lucky. How much do you know about your health insurance situation?

9. Lauren finds happiness helping others in her new career. Many times women themselves undervalue the caregiving they provide others. How can women be available to their families and still find other means of personal fulfillment?

10. Was Sloan courageous for keeping secrets or should she have had to atone for her participation in Cal?s crimes? Was she a victim or fully responsible for her actions? Will Sloan be able to move on and shake the shadow that follows her or will her past come back to haunt her?

11. Is Emmett ultimately a weak character or a strong one? How did you interpret the last scene? Will Emmett come home or end up back at Larry?s? If he comes home will be able to forgive Lauren?

Author Bio

Janna McMahan is the winner of the South Carolina Fiction Project, the Piccolo Spoleto Fiction Open, the Harriett Arnow Award from the Appalachian Writers Association, and the Fiction Prize from the Kentucky Women?s Writers Conference. She lives in Columbia, SC with her husband and their daughter.

Critical Praise

"Fans of Jodi Picoult?s work will appreciate this novel?s sparse, unexpected plot turns and moral complexities."

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Publication Date: April 1, 2009
Paperback: 352 pages
Publisher: Kensington
ISBN-10: 0758221975
ISBN-13: 9780758221971