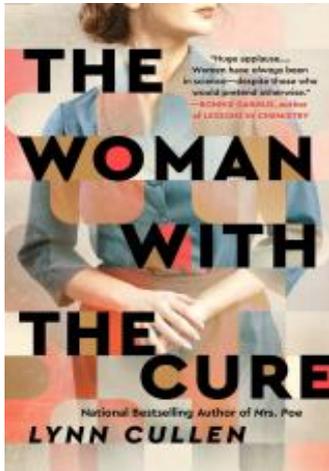


# The Woman with the Cure

by Lynn Cullen

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## About the Book

*She gave up everything --- and changed the world.*

**A riveting novel based on the true story of the woman who stopped a pandemic, from the bestselling author of MRS. POE.**

In 1940s and 1950s America, polio is as dreaded as the atomic bomb. No one's life is untouched by this disease that kills or paralyzes its victims, particularly children. Outbreaks of the virus across the country regularly put American cities in lockdown. Some of the world's best minds are engaged in the race to find a vaccine. The man who succeeds will be a god.

But Dorothy Horstmann is not focused on beating her colleagues to the vaccine. She just wants the world to have a cure. Applying the same determination that lifted her from a humble background as the daughter of immigrants, to becoming a doctor --- often the only woman in the room --- she hunts down the monster where it lurks: in the blood.

This discovery of hers, and an error by a competitor, catapults her closest colleague to a lead in the race. When his chance to win comes on a worldwide scale, she is asked to sink or validate his vaccine --- and to decide what is forgivable, and how much should be sacrificed, in pursuit of the cure.

## Discussion Guide

1. Polio touched everyone's lives in the decades that it reigned. Do you have family stories or personal recollections of the polio years?
2. Magazines, radio and television reinforced traditional roles for women during the polio era. Think about some

examples of television shows or ad campaigns from your youth that promoted the "ideal" woman. What are current examples in which contemporary media shapes our perception of women? Apply this thinking to a popular television series.

3. Examine the sacrifices made by the individual women in each lead-in chapter. Which of these women resonated with you the most?

4. Do you think Dorothy was right to end the relationship with Arne? What do you think their lives would have looked like if they'd stayed together?

5. Dorothy could not see her mother for who she was until Dorothy was far into adulthood. What important self-discoveries have you made only after having lived into adulthood?

6. As a reader, when did you understand Dorothy's mother's importance to Dorothy's success? How did her father contribute to building Dorothy's character? Who in your life has contributed to making you who you are, in quiet, easily unnoticeable ways?

7. In Denmark, Bente points out to Dorothy that all humankind is connected and that we'd be kinder if we only realized this. What is a way in which we are connected that we usually don't take time to realize?

8. The author states in the essay above: "What woman, even in young adulthood, isn't acutely aware of the choices she must make in balancing career, family, love and personal interests? Oh, sure, we can have it all, but in what proportions?" At what age were you first aware that you had to make choices? What choices did you make? Any regrets?

9. What parallels can be drawn from the polio years and recent COVID-19 pandemic times? Did you find yourself reflecting on these recent years and making any connections to your experiences while reading?

10. In the book, Sister Kenny states, "We are what we have willed ourselves to be, whether we realize it or not." Do you believe that there is some truth to this?

## Author Bio

Lynn Cullen's bestselling novels, including *THE WOMAN WITH THE CURE*, *THE SISTERS OF SUMMIT AVENUE*, *MRS. POE*, *TWAIN'S END*, *THE CREATION OF EVE* and *REIGN OF MADNESS*, have been translated into 17 languages and are the recipients of various honors, including NPR Great Read, Oprah.com Book of the Week, *People* magazine Book of the Week, Indie Next List selection, and *Atlanta* magazine Best Books of the Year. She lives in Atlanta.

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# **The Woman with the Cure**

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