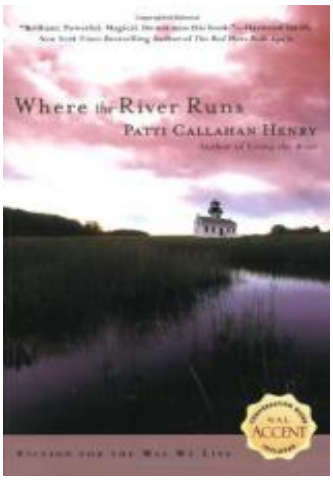
Where the River Runs

by Patti Callahan Henry



About the Book

Meridy Dresden was once a free-spirited, fun-loving girl. All that changed when the boy she loved was killed in a tragic fire...

Since then, she alone has carried the burden of a terrible secret. Now, years later, married to a wonderful man and mother of a teenage son, she is shocked to learn that a childhood friend is being blamed for that long-ago fire. Fearful but determined, Meridy returns to the South Carolina Low Country and summons the courage to make a decision that may destroy her well-ordered life, her family's reputation, her contented marriage, and everything she's worked so hard to protect...including her heart.

Discussion Guide

1. What are the three events that cause Meridy to return to Seaboro? How does her emotional state make her more open to taking action? Have you ever felt a desperate need for something, and then noticed that events in your life seem to support your desire to act upon that need?

2. You include an epigraph quoting St. Augustine: "Do you want to be great? Then begin by being." What do you think this statement means for Meridy? What is the difference for Meridy between being and doing? For you?

3. Meridy reconnects easily and deeply with Tim Oliver, yet seems disconnected and false with her friends in Atlanta. Why? What do you believe contributes to an honest/connected friendship? Which friends do you feel more connected with --- old or new?

4. Meridy comes to a new understanding of her mother during the novel. What is that new understanding and how is it able to improve their relationship? Do you feel you have a better or worse understanding of your mother's life now,

compared to when you were younger?

5. Meridy's best friend Cate has recently divorced Beau's boss, Harland. How is Meridy's social circle both ignoring and acknowledging this change? Do you have friends or family members whose divorce has affected your relationship with them?

6. Throughout the novel, Meridy begins to remember small pieces of "who I was" and even asks her mother, "Aren't we part of who we were?" Tulu consistently urges Meridy to "remember." Do you believe we can discard or forget the child or youth we once were? How do you believe your past affects who you are today?

7. Have you ever tried to be perfect for a man or earn his love with a false self? If so, what motivated your desire and how did you alter your behavior? What was the result? Is the desire to be perfect still ingrained in young girls from an early age, or has the pressure let up in recent years?

8. Meridy --- and her mother --- blamed the tragedy that befell Danny partly on Meridy's own youthful exuberance and irresponsibility. Do you agree that it was partly her fault? If you're a mother, what challenges do you face in guiding your teenaged children through this difficult period? What do you think your parents did right or wrong when you were a teen?

9. Tulu implores Meridy to allow the river of life to reach her heart, saying that the place where the river meets the sea is the most turbulent. Do you believe this is true for Meridy? For you? Can one stop life from reaching the heart?

10. Is there a part of your past that you've largely put aside, or buried, because it seems too painful or fruitless to examine? After reading this novel, are you inspired to take a new look at that event?

Author Bio

Patti Callahan Henry is the *New York Times* and *USA Today* bestselling author of several novels, including SURVIVING SAVANNAH and BECOMING MRS. LEWIS. She is the recipient of the Christy Award, the Harper Lee Award for Alabama?s Distinguished Writer of the Year Award, and the Alabama Library Association Book of the Year. She is the cohost and cocreator of the popular weekly online live web show and podcast "Friends and Fiction." She lives in Alabama and South Carolina with her family.

Critical Praise

"Meridy Dresden has a secret. It's haunted her for years, and with marriages crumbling all around her, Meridy realizes that the past could destroy her family, too. So she goes home to the South Carolina Lowcountry to protect the reputation of an old friend who is being unfairly blamed for the fire that killed Meridy's first love. As she crosses the bridge to her past, Meridy discovers that who we are has everything to do with who we once were. A melodious, encouraging tale that upholds memories, friendship and family by Alpharetta-resident Patti Callahan Henry."

Where the River Runs

by Patti Callahan Henry

Publication Date: May 3, 2005
Paperback: 235 pages
Publisher: NAL Trade
ISBN-10: 0451215052
ISBN-13: 9780451215055