



FLATIRON
BOOKS
NEW YORK

The Patron Saint of Pregnant Girls

Reading Group Guide

Welcome to the Reading Group Guide for *The Patron Saint of Pregnant Girls*. Please note: In order to provide reading groups with the most informed and thought-provoking questions possible, it is necessary to reveal important aspects of the plot of this novel—as well as the ending. If you have not finished reading *The Patron Saint of Pregnant Girls*, we respectfully suggest that you may want to wait before reviewing this guide.

1. Discuss the different ways in which motherhood is depicted in this novel, particularly through the stories of Lotte, Tilli, and Sabine. How are their experiences similar and different?
2. After losing her three eldest children to the Hundred Year Wave, Lotte tells Kalle she would sacrifice their surviving son, Wilhelm, to get the other three back. Do you sympathize with this heartbreaking perspective? How is Lotte and Kalle's grief portrayed over the course of the novel?
3. Discuss the ways in which many people of Norstrand view the nuns: “that they don't act like real nuns, that they float in a floaty world with art as their God; that they are dreamers.” Were you surprised by their characterization? What role do they play in the story?
4. The Old Women of Nordstrand are described as “its chroniclers, its conscience, its judges.” What role do they play in this story?
5. Discuss this passage: “Legends, the Old Women know, are ancient gossip; yet not all gossip leads to legends. By itself gossip won't last, but legends feed on gossip.” How would you describe the difference between legends and gossip?
6. Lotte reflects: “Because there are two sides to longing, hope and the danger of letting hope devour you.” What does she mean? What do the different characters long for in these pages?
7. What does Rungholt represent for the characters in this novel, especially Lotte and Kalle?
8. Herr Ludwig tells Heike: “Music is your magic...your very own magic. We're all magicians in a way, divining what lies beneath the surface of the ordinary and the extraordinary. And the amazing.” Using this definition, how are the other main characters “magicians”? How are you?
9. What role does the Zirkus play in this novel? What is the relationship between the town and the Zirkus? Did you have a favorite character from among the Zirkus people?

10. Although Sabine loves the beekeeper, she decides that it's safer for him to marry Heike, to give her security in case Sabine can no longer take care of her: "I won't consider him for myself because I've chosen him for my daughter, this decent man who'll honor his promises and his legal duties if he agrees to marry my daughter." What do you make of their arrangement? Do you think it's fair each of the three?
11. The girls at the St. Margaret Home come to think of Lotte as their patron saint: "Sinner and savior in one. You can identify with her. Though you're not as craven a sinner. Or as selfless a savior. You have been longing for this saint, your own patron saint." What is Lotte's relationship to the girls, especially Tilli? Discuss the ways in which they help and harm one another.
12. Did you have a favorite character among the three women at the novel's center, Lotte, Tilli, and Sabine? What do you think the future holds for these characters?