

Discussion guide for The Seeing Garden



- At various moments in the novel, Catherine muses on power. When in the story does she have power? When does she not? What is the source of her power?
- Catherine marvels at how different the California landscape is from what she knows in New York. Think about the landscape where you live, or where you were raised. How much do you think landscape affects one's character and perspective?
- What does the childhood rosary ritual add to Catherine's life?
- Which minor character did you find most intriguing? Why?
- Consider the various parents in the story. How do they affect their children's lives? Which parent/child relationships seem to be the strongest and most positive?
- Which images or moments from the book painted the most vivid pictures for you?
- Houses play a large role in the story. Compare and contrast Oakview, Aunt Abigail and Uncle Oliver's house, and Sea Glass Cottage.
- In which ways do women in this novel support one another? Where – and why – do they not support each other? Do you think those dynamics still exist today?
- Shame affects the decisions of some of the main characters. Is shame still a driving force in women's lives? In men's lives?
- Catherine's father tells her about the importance of making decisions "from the best that is in you." When in the story do we see characters doing that, or doing the opposite? Reflect on what his words mean to you in the context of your own life.
- The book addresses the limitations imposed on women. Do you think the male characters in the story also face limitations?
- Reflect on the role of art in the story. What does it mean to the various characters?