



## Beaches

By Iris R. Dart  
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### Introduction

Loud-mouthed, free-spirited Cee Cee Bloom has her sights set on Hollywood, and she is determined that nothing will get in her way. Bertie White, quiet and conservative, dreams of getting married and starting a family. In 1951, these radically different childhood worlds collide under the boardwalk in Atlantic City, and Cee Cee and Bertie embark on a lifelong friendship that they sustain over the years through letters and frequent reunions. Powerful and moving, *Beaches* follows Cee Cee and Bertie's extraordinary and tumultuous friendship over the course of thirty years as they transform from adolescents to adults. As Cee Cee emerges as a full-fledged star, Bertie develops from a beautiful young girl with a sentimental heart into a woman of substance and strength. Both women support one another through their mutual successes and failures, hopes and disappointments, and joys and sorrows. A bestselling novel that became a hugely successful film, *Beaches* is funny and heartbreaking in its portrait of an unwavering bond between the best of friends.

### Questions for Discussion

- Beaches* opens with Cee Cee Bloom in the middle of a rehearsal in Los Angeles in 1983, and then it shifts back in time to Bertie White lost in Atlantic City in 1951. How did the shifts in time and from one character to another enhance your reading of this novel? Did any flashbacks in particular give you insight into the nature of Cee Cee and Bertie's friendship?
- Is Bertie and Cee Cee's friendship a classic case of "opposites attract?" What does each have to offer to the other?
- How would you describe Cee Cee's home life? What role does Leona play in her development as a celebrity? How does it compare to Bertie's upbringing?
- Throughout *Beaches*, a great deal of the friendship between Bertie and Cee Cee is conveyed through the letters they exchange. How important are these letters to their friendship? What role do they play in the course of the novel?
- When Cee Cee and Bertie wind up in Beach Haven working for the same theatrical troupe, how does each explore her developing sexuality? Were you surprised by the jealousy the friends experienced during this period?
- How do John Perry and Michael Barron impact the women's friendship? Discuss the developments that took place when both couples travelled to Hawaii together.
- Were you surprised by the sacrifices each friend was willing to make for the other?

What role does Rosie White's illness play in bringing Cee Cee and Bertie back together? What does Cee Cee's behavior at Rosie's bedside suggest about her character?

- Were you surprised by Bertie's decision to keep Michael's baby? What did you think of Cee Cee's role in Bertie's pregnancy?
- What message about friendship did you take away from the conclusion of *Beaches*?

### About the author

Iris Rainer Dart is the author of eight novels, including the much-beloved *New York Times* bestseller *Beaches*. The mother of two children, she lives in California with her husband.