

Sweet Water

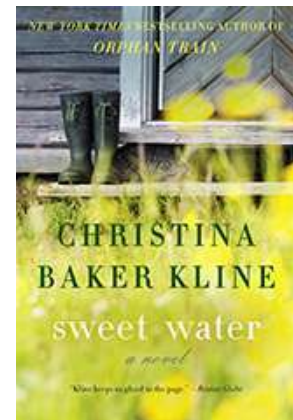
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By Christina Baker Kline

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Introduction

From the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of *Orphan Train* comes a novel about buried secrets and the redemptive power of forgiveness.



Cassie Simon is a struggling artist living in New York City. When she receives a call from a magistrate telling her she has inherited sixty acres of land in Sweetwater, Tennessee, from her grandfather, whom she never knew, she takes it as a sign: it's time for a change. She moves to the small Southern town where her mother, Ellen, grew up—and where she died tragically when Cassie was three.

From the moment she arrives in Sweetwater, Cassie is overwhelmed by the indelible mark her mother's memory left behind. As she delves into the thicket of mystery that surrounds her mother's death, Cassie begins to discover the desperate measures of which the human heart is capable.

Questions for Discussion

1. Why do you think the author chose to tell the story from two different perspectives? What impact does this have on the narrative?
2. Adam tells Cassie, "It's just that usually when people pick up and move they're either going toward something or running away." Which do you think Cassie is doing?
3. Why do you think Clyde is so unwelcoming to Cassie at first? What does Cassie represent to her?
4. When Cassie gifts her grandmother a bowl she mentions that she's always felt the need to fill things up. Her grandmother says, "I used to feel that way. Now I guess I like things empty." If we read this statement as a metaphor, what do you think it means in the context of Clyde's story?
5. The author does an incredible job of evoking a sense of place. Which do you think is most successful in painting this picture: the cast of characters, the author's use of imagery, or the stories that Clyde tells?
6. Troy tells Cassie that it doesn't do much good to go digging around in the past. Many members of the Clyde family seem to feel this way. Do you think it's better to leave the past behind, or better to face your demons?

7. Why do you think it was so important to Elaine to preserve her mother's secrets? What good did she think she was doing?
8. Do you think that Cassie will stay in Sweetwater? Or will she go back to New York City? What do you think will happen between her and Troy?
9. Family secrets lie at the center of this novel. How might the story have been different if all of the members of Cassie's family had been honest with one another?