

Girl Unbroken

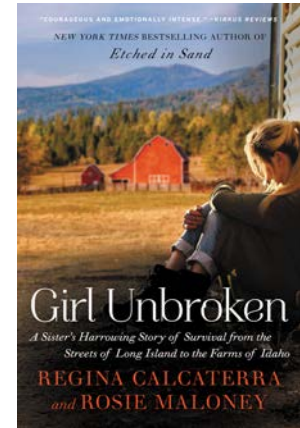
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By Regina Calcaterra and Rosie Maloney

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Introduction

In the highly anticipated sequel to her *New York Times* bestseller *Etched in Sand*, Regina Calcaterra pairs with her youngest sister Rosie to tell Rosie's harrowing, yet ultimately triumphant, story of childhood abuse and survival.



They were five kids with five different fathers and an alcoholic mother who left them to fend for themselves for weeks at a time. Yet through it all they had each other. Rosie, the youngest, is fawned over and shielded by her older sister, Regina. Their mother, Cookie, blows in and out of their lives “like a hurricane, blind and uncaring to everything in her path.” But when Regina discloses the truth about her abusive mother to her social worker, she is separated from her younger siblings Norman and Rosie. And as Rosie discovers after Cookie kidnaps her from foster care, the one thing worse than being abandoned by her mother is living in Cookie's presence.

Filled with maturity and grace, Rosie's memoir continues the compelling story begun in *Etched in Sand*—a shocking yet profoundly moving testament to sisterhood and indomitable courage.

Questions for Discussion

1. What is the dynamic between Rosie and her mother Cookie at the beginning of the book and how does that dynamic shift throughout the book?
2. Regina, though still in many ways a child herself, acts as a mother figure to Rosie, calling her *mia bambina*. What important values does Rosie learn from Regina that she carries with her even when she and Regina are separated?
3. At the Callahan's house we see just how dysfunctional the foster care system was. Do you think this is an accurate portrayal? Do you think the system has changed since Rosie was in it?
4. What is the relationship between Rosie and Regina at the start of the book? How does Rosie's relationship with her sister change as she moves farther from home?

5. There was never a shortage of men coming in and out of Cookie's life. Comparing all of them, how did each impact the well-being of Rosie and Norman?
6. Considering the abuse Rosie faced in the foster care system, do you think she was better off after Cookie kidnapped her and her brother?
7. How do you think Norman was adversely impacted by the abuse Rosie suffered? Norman at times seems to sympathize with his mother. How can two children have such different experiences being raised by the same woman?
8. In *Girl Unbroken* we learn more about Cookie. Was there any good in Cookie? Why do you think she was so abusive?
9. From Flavia to Paige, Rosie experienced and treasured a few close friendships in her childhood. How did these friendships help her survive life at home with Cookie?
10. What is Rosie's relationship with religion and what role does it play in the community she lives?
11. Place yourself in Regina's shoes. How do you think she felt knowing her sister was so far away and she was virtually powerless to help her? Do you think there was anything she or her sisters could have done to save Rosie when their plan to "kidnap" her failed?
12. What did you learn about working on a farm from this book? Considering the amount of labor Rosie was forced to do and the impact it had on her physically and emotionally, were you surprised that no one suspected she was being abused at home sooner?
13. Why did it take so long for Rosie to come forward and reveal her abuse to her teachers? What was holding her back?
14. After college, Rosie voluntarily returned for the summer to the home where her mother and Clyde lived. Why do you think she would willingly surround herself with her abusers?
15. Both Cookie and Clyde abused Rosie. How did their abuse styles differ? How did they work together to keep her trapped under their control? Could Rosie have done anything to protect herself, or was she powerless?
16. Regina and Rosie collaborated to write this story. How do you think authoring a book together affected their relationship? What do you think they learned about each other in the process?

17. How do you think becoming a mother put into perspective Rosie's own relationship with Cookie? How did it impact the way she raised her own children? What do you think Rosie's children will say after reading their mother's story?

18. If you have already read *Etched in Sand*, how does Rosie's story in *Girl Unbroken* compare to Regina's own story? If you have not read *Etched in Sand*, after reading *Girl Unbroken*, do you feel compelled to read it? What do you hope to learn?