

The Oysterville Sewing Circle

William Morrow

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ISBN: 9780062425584

Introduction

The #1 *New York Times* bestselling author brings us her most ambitious and provocative work yet—a searing and timely novel that explores the most volatile issue of our time—domestic violence.

At the break of dawn, Caroline Shelby rolls into Oysterville, Washington, a tiny hamlet at the edge of the raging Pacific.

She's come home.

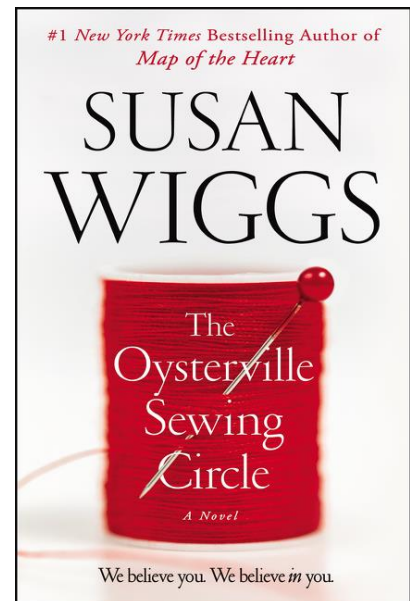
Home to a place she thought she'd left forever, home of her heart and memories, but not her future. Ten years ago, Caroline launched a career in the glamorous fashion world of Manhattan. But her success in New York imploded on a wave of scandal and tragedy, forcing her to flee to the only safe place she knows.

And in the backseat of Caroline's car are two children who were orphaned in a single chilling moment—five-year-old Addie and six-year-old Flick. She's now their legal guardian—a role she's not sure she's ready for.

But the Oysterville she left behind has changed. Her siblings have their own complicated lives and her aging parents are hoping to pass on their thriving seafood restaurant to the next generation. And there's Will Jensen, a decorated Navy SEAL who's also returned home after being wounded overseas. Will and Caroline were forever friends as children, with the promise of something more . . . until he fell in love with Sierra, Caroline's best friend and the most beautiful girl in town. With her modeling jobs drying up, Sierra, too, is on the cusp of reinventing herself.

Caroline returns to her favorite place: the sewing shop owned by Mrs. Lindy Bloom, the woman who inspired her and taught her to sew. There she discovers that even in an idyllic beach town, there are women living with the deepest of secrets. Thus begins the Oysterville Sewing Circle—where women can join forces to support each other through the troubles they keep hidden.

Yet just as Caroline regains her creativity and fighting spirit, and the children begin to heal from their loss, an unexpected challenge tests her courage and her heart. This time, though, Caroline is not going to run away. She's going to stand and fight for everything—and everyone—she loves.



Questions for Discussion

1. In this novel's first scene, we see Caroline Shelby headed back to the hometown she'd been eager to leave ten years earlier. Did she do the right thing by returning? Would you choose to go back to your parents' home if you'd been in a similar situation? Why or why not?
2. Caroline thinks to herself about Sierra and Will: "We're not kids anymore. The past is the past. They could start fresh. Clean slate." Is that just wishful thinking? Are clean slates truly possible? Do they manage to start fresh?
3. When Caroline says to Sierra "I'm really happy for you," she then reflects, "*I'm really happy for you*." One of the great empty phrases used by so many people to hide so many real feelings. Could you actually tie your happiness to someone else?" What do you think?
4. Caroline was raised in a small town with a close-knit family whereas Will moved constantly with his father's military deployment and lost his mother when he was twelve. How do their different backgrounds affect their worldview as children? As adults? Why do their life's paths both end up leading back to Oysterville?
5. When reading *Old Yeller* to Flick and Addie, Caroline discovers, to her horror, that the book ended with the dog's death, not the happy ending she remembered from childhood. She accuses her mother of changing the ending and her mother simply replies "Did I? That was smart of me. I certainly didn't want the five of you up all night crying over a sad dog story." Did her mother do the right thing? Would you ever change the ending of your favorite children's book?
6. In the first chapter, Caroline looks at Angelique and thinks "The last thing she looked like was a victim." What do you think Caroline was looking for that she didn't see? She later looks at Lindy Bloom, another survivor of domestic violence and considers how Lindy Bloom had always "seemed as steady and grounded as the lighthouses along the coast." How does this novel challenge our ideas about what victims of domestic violence look like? How does organizing the Oysterville Sewing Circle shift Caroline's perception?
7. When Sierra confesses to Caroline that she'd terminated a pregnancy and hidden it from Will, Caroline thinks to herself, "the truth needed to come out, but it wasn't hers to disclose." If you were Caroline—or Sierra—would you have kept that kind of secret? Should Sierra have shared it with Caroline at all?
8. When Caroline tells Sierra that she and Will are finally a couple, Sierra is furious, and hangs up on her. Why does she feel that way even though she ended her marriage to Will? Would you feel the same?
9. When Caroline realizes she'll have to fight Mick Taylor in court, she tells Daria that "I have a superpower too—knowing how to organize a group of women." How does she put that superpower to good use?

10. What do you think happens to the characters in the years after this novel ends? Will the Oysterville Sewing Circle continue?
11. Are there organizations like the Oysterville Sewing Circle that have made a difference in your life, or in the lives of your friends and family? What would be your ideal organization of women supporting women?