

The Home *for* Wayward Girls

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Reading Group Guide

1. Loretta has a connection to nature and wildlife at the ranch. What do you think the falcon, the logo for adult Loretta's foundation, represents?
2. The author says only that the ranch is located "west of the Rockies." Why do you think there is not an exact location? How does the setting permit William's harsh treatment of the residents?
3. Loretta describes watching her physical bruises fade and describes her scars as a road map documenting William's abuse. But the memory of William's verbal and emotional insults is everlasting. Will it be possible to recover and overcome her childhood trauma?
4. Adult Loretta suffers from near-debilitating anxiety. Will she ever feel safe?
5. Loretta's therapist pushes adult Loretta to unearth a "happy" memory from her childhood. Loretta insists there weren't any. Is it possible for there to be happy memories among the terrible ones?
6. Consider William's punishment: "Silent Cloud." Why is this social isolation so feared among the residents? Does social isolation inflict more anguish than physical beatings?
7. Consider Mama: Does she bear the same culpability as her husband, William, or is Mama another victim?
8. Do you think Mama loves her daughter Loretta?
9. Do you believe working with runaways and abused women is a good fit for adult Loretta, given her personal history?
10. Consider Clarke, adult Loretta's husband: Is a healthy marriage realistic or possible for someone like Loretta, given her traumatic past?
11. Loretta doesn't wear a ring. She states, "I don't like identification of any sort. . . ." What is the significance of her statement?
12. Do you agree with adult Loretta's decision to burn the ranch? Is it possible to "erase" the past?
13. Discuss Loretta's teacher, Mrs. Del. What role did she play in changing the course of Loretta's life? Did a teacher impact your life?
14. Does the title *The Home for Wayward Girls* suit the novel? What would you name the book?

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