



Five Quarters of the Orange

By Joanne Harris
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Introduction

When Framboise Simon returns to a small village on the banks of the Loire, the locals do not recognize her as the daughter of the infamous Mirabelle Dartigen—the woman they still hold responsible for the terrible tragedy that took place during the German occupation decades before. Although Framboise hopes for a new beginning, she quickly discovers that past and present are inextricably intertwined. Nowhere is this truth more apparent than in the scrapbook of recipes she has inherited from her dead mother.

Using this book, Framboise recreates her mother's dishes, which she serves in her small creperie. And yet as she studies the scrapbook—searching for clues to unlock the contradiction between her mother's sensuous love of food and often cruel demeanor—she begins to recognize a deeper meaning behind Mirabelle's cryptic scribbles. Within the journal's tattered pages lies the key to what actually

transpired the summer Framboise was nine years old, when the Germans occupied their town.

Rich and dark, *Five Quarters of the Orange* is a novel of mothers and daughters, of the past and the present, of resisting and succumbing.

Questions for Discussion

1. Framboise's mother loved all fruit—except for oranges, which gave her migraines. Young Framboise exploited this to her advantage. Discuss Framboise's motivations. Was she cruel, or just acting on the impulses that often drive adolescents to commit cruel acts?
2. How did you feel about the children's involvement with Tomas? Were they morally deficient? Do you think that the author judged the children's actions anywhere in the narrative? Discuss how the presence—or lack—of judgement affected the tone of the novel.
3. How is the title, *Five Quarters of the Orange*, manifested in the structure of the novel?
4. What do you think Old Mother symbolized? When Framboise finally caught Old Mother, what did she lose?
5. Why do you think Framboise returned to Les Laveuses? Was there a part of her that wanted the truth revealed?
6. "Food was her nostalgia, her celebration, its nurture and preparation the sole outlet for her creativity" (pg 4). Framboise said this about her mother's relationship with food. Discuss the many different roles food plays in Framboise's life.
7. How did you feel about the mixture of love and animosity that Framboise and Mirabelle feel for each other? And what about the relationship between Framboise and her own daughter? What do you think the novel says about mothers and daughters in general?

About the Author

Joanne Harris is the author of the critically acclaimed novels *Blackberry Wine*, *Five Quarters of the Orange*, and *Chocolat*, which was nominated for the Whitbread Award, one of Britain's most prestigious literary prizes. Half French and half British, Harris lives in England.