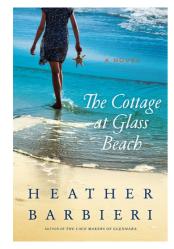# Cottage at Glass Beach, The EPB

By Heather Barbieri
ISBN: 9780062107985

Questions for Discussion

1. Shifting alliances between mothers and daughters are a powerful dynamic in many families. How do the alliances change between Nora and each of her daughters? Who feels alienated? When? Why?

2. What do you think about Nora's choice to informally separate from her husband and spend that summer on Burke's Island, some hours from their home in Boston? How does her decision affect the family?

3. How did Maeve's disappearance affect Nora and Maire? Who has been most damaged by the loss? Why? How does family history continue to affect them?

4. *The Cottage at Glass Beach* has a rich cast of minor characters. How does each contribute to the overall flavor of the novel?

5. Many small communities experience a tension between the modern world and traditional values. How does this dynamic affect Burke's Island?

6. What role does Nora's personal history play in terms of the choices she makes on Burke's Island?

7. Burke's Island is a character in its own right. What is the significance of the setting and how does this backdrop affect each character? Is the island a metaphor for the characters? What does it represent? How is the setting important to the themes of the book?

8. Why types of symbols do you find in the novel? How do the characters react to them? What are some of the recurrent themes?

9. What are the characters' attitudes toward faith and religion? How is religion, specifically Catholicism, treated in the novel?

10. How do the characters view their Irish history? What role does it play in their lives?

11. Small town life can be a curse for some people, a gift to others. How do Nora and her daughters' feelings about Burke's Island change over the course of the book?

12. What role does magical realism play in the novel? How are the characters shaped by their superstitions and beliefs?

13. Where could the story go after the book ends? What do you think lies in store for the major characters?