

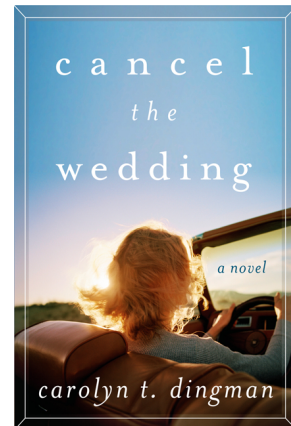
Cancel the Wedding

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Introduction

A heartfelt tale of one woman's journey to discover the secrets of her mother's hidden past and confront her own uncertain future, this compelling, emotionally resonant novel about the frustrations of blood ties will appeal to fans of Emily Giffin and Jennifer Weiner.



On the surface, Olivia has it all: a high-powered career, a loving family, and a handsome fiancé. She even seems to be coming to terms with her mother Jane's premature death from cancer. But when Jane's final wish is revealed, Olivia and her elder sister, Georgia, are mystified. Their mother rarely spoke of her rural Southern hometown, and never went back to visit—so why does she want them to return to Huntley, Georgia, to scatter her ashes?

Jane's request offers Olivia a temporary escape from the reality she's long been denying: she hates her "dream" job, and she's not really sure she wants to marry her groom-to-be. With her fourteen-year-old niece, Logan, riding shotgun, she heads south on a summer road trip looking for answers about her mother.

As Olivia gets to know the town's inhabitants, she begins to peel back the secrets of her mother's early life—truths that force her to question her own future. But when Olivia is confronted with a tragedy and finds an opportunity to right a terrible wrong, will it give her the courage to accept her mother's past—and say yes to her own desire to start over?

Questions for Discussion

1. The book begins with Olivia's impulsive announcement about her trip to Georgia to find out more about her mother. It is a spontaneous decision meant as a small and insignificant trip, but this seemingly small choice ends up changing the course of her life. Have you ever made an insignificant choice that ended up shifting the path of your life? What happened?
2. One major theme of the book is the challenges of understanding one's parents. Olivia is trying to discover who her mother was in her previous life. Can we ever really know who our parents were as children or young adults, or are we only ever able to see them through the very defining lens of being our parent?

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3. Olivia's emotional turmoil manifests itself physically in many ways. She is drinking more than her sister, Georgia, is comfortable with, and develops a klutziness that causes her to constantly injure herself. Has a trauma you've experienced manifested itself in similar ways? How do you find yourself acting when you're under emotional stress?
 4. Who is Olivia ultimately learning about on this journey? Do you think finding out more about her mother's past was a positive thing for Olivia? How you think it affected the way Olivia decided to handle her own future?
 5. Leo is intentionally unavailable to Olivia throughout the novel. Do you believe he is unaware of how tenuous their relationship is? Why might Leo be reluctant to acknowledge what's happened to them as a couple?
 6. Olivia convinces herself that compartmentalizing her growing feelings for Elliott and her failing relationship with Leo is defensible because it will cause the least amount of harm for the moment. Why do you, or do you not, empathize with her? How did you feel when Elliott and Leo came face to face?
 7. The story of Janie and George unfolds slowly through the book. Many of the significant discoveries come from the stories that Florence shares and the photographs that Buddy shares. Why do you think Florence and Buddy might want to keep Janie and George's life together private, even after their deaths? How did you feel when they began to reveal things?
 8. Logan is an interesting travelling companion for Olivia because she is neither a child nor an adult. She has a childlike honesty, especially with Olivia, but she also possesses the keen insight of a much more mature person. Logan acts as Olivia's companion, a touchstone, and as Olivia's conscious in the story. How do you think Logan's presence contributed to Olivia's decision to stay so long in Tillman without Logan?
 9. Emory takes an interest in Olivia from the moment he meets her. He is curious about Olivia because she is Janie's child, but he is also wary of what it could mean for him personally to dredge up the past. Why do you think Emory feels he has something to hide?
 10. When we first meet Buddy in the woods we see him through Olivia's perception of him. Her understanding of him is very limited and prejudiced. As Buddy slowly reveals more of himself we begin to understand him more and view him with more depth. It is not Buddy that changes, but Olivia's perception of Buddy that evolves. Have you ever made a snap judgment about a person that turned out to be shallow or wrong? What occurred to change your mind?
 11. Olivia feels that it is necessary at the end of her "fact-finding mission" that they move the body of Oliver themselves to reunite the small family. Why do you think she wanted to do this?

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12. Do you believe that Olivia was afraid of marriage or simply afraid of the idea of marrying Leo? At the end of the story Olivia and Elliott literally say, "I do," to each other by the lake, in essence making the same promise that one makes in a marriage ceremony. Why could Elliott be the right person for Olivia?