

Doubleday Reading Group Guide

The Night Sister

A Novel

By Jennifer McMahon

New York Times Bestselling Author of *The Winter People*

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Introduction

For three girls in the tiny town of London, Vermont, the summer of 1989 will change their lives forever. Piper and her little sister, Margot, never run out of ways to entertain themselves with their friend Amy, whose family owns the once-spectacular Tower Motel. It's now a dilapidated relic, yet it's a paradise for the girls' imaginations, packed with mysterious treasures from the motel's heyday. But one day they make a horrific discovery about Amy's aunt, who disappeared in the 1960s just after her eighteenth birthday. Everyone said she had run off to Hollywood to live out her dream of becoming Alfred Hitchcock's next star, but the girls find evidence of foul play—a revelation that shatters their friendship. Nearly twenty-five years later, their secret comes back to haunt them when Amy's house turns into a violent crime scene. Is Amy at the root of this evil, or is her reclusive mother, Rose, to blame? And what happened between Rose and her sister all those years ago, setting in motion a legacy of bloodshed?

Packed with the gripping plot twists and stirring atmosphere that have made Jennifer McMahon a bestselling master of suspense, *The Night Sister* will captivate you on every page. We hope the following topics will enrich your reading group's discussion of this chilling tale.

Questions and Topics for Discussion

1. Sylvie and Rose are rivals, while Piper and Margot have a close bond. What determines whether sisters get along? How do the siblings in the book compare to yours?
2. Amy, Piper, and Margot are first-rate sleuths at age twelve. What's special about that age? Are adolescents better than their parents at seeing the truth and having an open mind?
3. Discuss the novel's interwoven timelines. Would you rather grow up in the 21st century, the 1950s, or the 1980s? In *The Night Sister*, what stays the same throughout all three eras?
4. What fuels Jason's attraction to Amy? How do his feelings about her change throughout their lifetimes?
5. How was your reading affected by Sylvie's letters to Alfred Hitchcock, and the real-life connection to Vermont in *The Trouble with Harry*? How do you think Hitchcock and his

staff would have responded to her letters?

6. What were your theories about Fenton? How did your opinion of him shift?

7. With echoes of *Psycho*'s Bates Motel, what makes the Tower Motel a powerful setting for this storyline? What did the tower represent to each generation? What did you expect the 29th room to look like?

8. Compare the novel's three marriages: Charlotte and Clarence, Amy and Mark, Margot and Jason. What are the greatest strengths and vulnerabilities in these relationships?

9. What did you believe about the moth Rose keeps in a jar?

10. "Mare" is an Old English word, not an invention of the author; we use it when we talk about nightmares. How did you react to Oma's lessons about mares? What do you believe about the tangible nature of evil?

11. What do you predict for Rose and Lou? As mothers, did Charlotte and Amy do the right thing?

12. At the heart of the novel is a legacy of secrecy. Are there any long-held secrets in your family? What would it take to be ostracized by your relatives?

13. How does *The Night Sister* enhance your experience of Jennifer McMahon's previous novels? What is unique about the way her characters confront the unknown?

About the Author

JENNIFER McMAHON is the author of six novels, including the *New York Times* bestsellers *Promise Not to Tell* and *The Winter People*. She graduated from Goddard College and studied poetry in the MFA Writing Program at Vermont College.

Guide written by Amy Clements