

ABOUT THE BOOK

Stella and Angel, two foster children living with Stella's great-aunt Louise, don't get along and barely speak to each other. When Louise dies suddenly, the girls make the surprising and unusual decision to stay on together at the house, managing the vacation cottages on the property. Stella hopes for the return of her wandering mother, while Angel is waiting for her only relative to arrive from abroad. Their plan is surprisingly easy—and unbearably hard. In the end the girls realize that they've become each other's most trusted family.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What do Louise and Stella's mother mean when they say "Too much water under that bridge" (p. 7)? What does that saying tell you about the relationship between Stella's mother and her aunt?
2. Think about Stella's image of the iceberg, which she first mentions in relation to Angel. How does this image help her react to various people and events in her life? What does it mean when Louise refers to Stella and Angel as "oil and water" (p. 10)?
3. Why does Stella not call the police when she finds Louise dead? Why does she ask Angel to stay, and why do they lie to George Nickerson? Why isn't George more suspicious?
4. Why do you think Stella is so delighted with the cottages when she first sees the insides? Why is it important to her that they are all the same size, small, and neat? Why is cleaning the cottages so important to Stella? What is the importance of her file of "Hints from Heloise"?

5. What does George mean when he says "Broken things always have a story, don't they?" (p. 38)? Discuss this comment as it applies to the characters in the story, as well as to objects.

6. Think about the different stories of Stella's father and Angel's father. How do these stories affect each girl? What part does music play in the history of each of the girls?

7. Discuss Stella's need to find connections between people—what she calls "real bonds" (p. 2). What are some of the connections she finds, and what are the connections she is missing? Why are the blueberry bushes so important to her?

8. What did Stella's grandmother mean when she told her that Stella's mother was like a fragile glass ornament, but that she and Stella were like rubber balls (p. 104)? What do we know of Stella's mother from the stories that Louise and George tell about her?

9. How do Stella and Angel become friends and learn to trust each other? Why is it so difficult for them? Think about this quote from C. S. Lewis: "Friendship . . . is one of those things that give value to survival." How does it apply to Stella and Angel? How does it apply to your own life?

10. How do the girls react to the Fourth of July holiday? What does "independence" mean to Stella and to Angel? What does it mean to you? How does Stella feel about the families who check into the cottages?

11. How does Stella know that the storm is approaching when she is babysitting at the beach? Do you think Stella acts older than her age? In what ways? What influences on her life have forced her to take charge of situations?

12. What is the importance of the gypsy moths to the story? Why do you think the author chose to name the book *Summer of the Gypsy Moths*?

13. Why does Stella decide it's time to call the police and tell them about Louise? What makes her give up her fantasy of having her mother come back? Why does Angel decide not to run?

14. Discuss the theme of belonging in this story as it relates to property, to animals, and to people. Why is it important to make connections with others and with places where you feel you "belong"? Where do you feel you belong?

15. Why does George decide to take Stella in when he moves back to his house? What has George learned about himself in the course of the story? What has Stella learned about herself? And what has Angel learned about herself?

16. Write the next chapter of the story for yourself. Do you think Stella's mother will be able to take care of her, or will Stella stay with George? What do you think Stella will do with her life when she grows up? Will she and Angel remain friends?





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S U M M E R

of the

Gypsy Moths



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