



Promises

BOOK CLUB DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

A thoughtful guide for discussing home, history, ambition, motherhood, resilience, and the promises that shape our lives.

These questions contain spoilers and include discussion of abandonment, trauma, addiction, violence, childbirth, and grief. Groups may wish to approach these subjects with sensitivity.

- 1 The novel moves between Rebecca and Luke's present-day story and Mary Davis's journal from the nineteenth century. How did the two timelines affect the way you experienced the novel? Did one draw you in more strongly than the other?

- 2 Rebecca's grandfather leaves her Mary Davis's journal and pocket watch, hoping the story will give her the strength to move forward. In what ways does reading Mary's story change Rebecca's understanding of her own life?

- 3 George Davis makes grand promises of wealth, adventure, and security, while Amelia's promises are quieter and rooted in action. What does the contrast between them suggest about what makes a promise trustworthy?

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- 4 The Davis women lose their wealth and social position before building businesses, a community, and a new identity. Does their story support the traditional idea of the American Dream, challenge it, or do both?
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- 5 Mary, Clara, and Susan possess very different kinds of strength. How does each sister change as hardship reveals abilities that she - and the others - may not have recognized?
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- 6 Amelia's friendship and business partnership with Atuca, known publicly as Dominga, crosses boundaries of race, status, and social respectability. How does their relationship challenge the community's ideas about virtue and worth?
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- 7 Life on the frontier places severe restrictions and dangers on women, yet it also gives the Davis women opportunities they may never have had in New York. Where do you see freedom and oppression existing side by side?
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- 8 The Davis women help create the town, but later stories recast the sisters as witches who brought about its destruction. Why are powerful or unconventional women so often transformed into villains in the stories societies tell?
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- 9 Mary's journal is only one version of the past, and Clara's newly discovered memoir promises another. What might Mary misunderstand, omit, or protect? How does perspective shape what eventually becomes accepted as history?
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- 10 Rebecca sees herself as Davis Crest's protector and initially regards Luke as a threat. How much of her opposition is based on principle, and how much is rooted in grief, fear of change, or her family's history?
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- 11 Luke arrives measuring success through profit, status, and professional advancement. What most changes his thinking: Rebecca, the people of Davis Crest, his growing connection to the town, or his own conscience?
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- 12 The Mission Ridge debate pits economic opportunity against environmental protection and the character of the town. Did Rebecca and Luke's revised plan feel like a convincing compromise? What would you have wanted them to preserve?
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- 13 Rebecca once dreamed of becoming an architect but set that ambition aside when she became a mother. Does her work on Mission Ridge represent the return of an old dream, the creation of a new one, or both?
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- 14 Compare Dylan and Luke as father figures in Amber's life. What does the novel suggest about the difference between biological parenthood and the daily choice to show up for a child?
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- 15 Luke gradually recognizes his relationship with Chase as manipulative and abusive. To what extent is Luke also responsible for the behavior he enabled while benefiting from the Burnett family's privilege?
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- 16 Both Rebecca and Luke carry scars - some visible, others carefully hidden. Which moments of vulnerability allow them to begin healing, and how much of that healing comes from love, community, or their own choices?
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- 17 Home means something different to Mary, Amelia, Rebecca, Luke, and Amber. Is home primarily a place, a family, a history, or a decision? Which setting in the novel most fully embodies that idea for you?
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- 18 Which promise - broken, kept, or newly made - feels most important to the novel? How does it illuminate the title, and what unanswered question from the Davis women's story would you most like the next book to explore?
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Thank you for reading - and for keeping the promises that matter.