

Readers' Guide Discussion Questions

Margreete's Harbor

1. In the beginning of the book, an entire family uprooted their lives and moved across the country to be with an elder who was failing to thrive. What do you think about this decision, and what are the alternatives these days for a family in similar circumstances?
2. How do you think Margreete's presence in the house affected Bernie, Eva, and Gretchen, growing up under the same roof with a grandmother whose dementia grew more pronounced year by year?
3. After the birth of her third child, Liddie had moments of despair as she attempted to balance her talents as a musician with her role as mother, wife, and caretaker of her mother. How effectively did she handle the stresses on her, and how would you compare these stressors with what Harry experienced?
4. How did a coastal New England setting affect the feel of the story?
5. What did you make of the relationship between Harry and Molly? Did you find yourself judging them, or did you find their relationship understandable, even sympathetic?
6. What do you feel were the greatest impediments to happiness in Harry's and Liddie's marriage?
7. In terms of racial awareness, how have things changed, if at all, between now and the 1950's and 1960's, when *Margreete's Harbor* is set?
8. What role did animals play in the book?
9. Americans in the 1960's saw graphic footage of the Vietnam War on their TV sets every night, which historians now believe was partially responsible for the shifts in public opinion about the war. How do you think media coverage has changed, if at all, for wars that American soldiers have been involved with since then?
10. How did different members of the family handle their grief after Margreete died?
11. Why was Eva convinced that she would not ever, ever, ever tell anyone about what happened to her after school that day? How did that event change her, in relation to music and to her sense of herself in the world?
12. In rural areas of the U.S. where Bernie was growing up, open, non-judgmental conversations about sexual identities were rare to non-existent. Bernie's friendship with Noah would have ended if he'd told the truth. How do you imagine that affected him?

