

Sisters Like Us

Reader's Discussion Guide

Please note: these questions contain spoilers. You should wait to read them until after you've finished the book.

1. With which sister did you identify most strongly? Why?
2. When asked what inspired this novel, Susan Mallery said:

I watched a documentary called “The Last Man on the Moon” about astronaut Gene Cernan, and it got me thinking about all of the astronauts in the early years of NASA, and how much their families must have sacrificed. The rewards were heady, I’m sure, but a kid still wants her daddy at her birthday party. In *Sisters Like Us*, the sisters’ maternal grandfather was an astronaut, and their mom resented the time he spent away from home, and that he was willing to die and abandon his family forever. Those feelings about her childhood colored how she raised the girls, of course, leading to their struggle with questions of what is the right amount to love your job. How much can you give to your work before you start taking away from your family?

I was interested in the idea of legacy, of how events of the distant past impact events of today in a thousand subtle ways. *Sisters Like Us* isn’t about astronauts at all. In fact, their grandfather is only mentioned a couple of times. But his impact on their lives is huge because of the way their mother *perceived* her childhood.

How did this play out in the story? Are there any other ways that their grandfather’s time as an astronaut affected Harper and Stacey’s lives? What events from your parents’ childhood do you think affected yours?

3. Why was Becca so unhappy at the start of the book? Do you think she had a right to be? Why or why not?
4. *Sisters Like Us* has three main characters: Harper, Stacey, and Becca. What were the major turning points of each character’s story? Did the events of each storyline affect the others and, if so, how?
5. What did you think of Lucas? If you’ve read the first book in which he appeared, *A Million Little Things*, did your opinion of him change? Why do you think Lucas was attracted to Harper, and vice versa? How did you feel when he brought another woman to Harper’s house, despite his promise not to? Harper forgave him—did you? What did you think of his relationship with Becca?
6. Why did Harper choose to work as a virtual assistant? Do you think she made the right decision? What would you have done differently?
7. Discuss Becca’s reaction to finding out that her friend was no longer a virgin. At what age do you think a girl is too young to lose her virginity? Do you have a different opinion about how young is too young for a boy?
8. Bunny has some very firm ideas about men and women. How have gender roles changed over the years? Do you think Stacey and Kit’s marriage is unusual, in the roles each plays in the family? Why or why not?
9. Were you happy with the ending? Why or why



not?

10. On her Facebook page (Facebook.com/SusanMallery), Susan Mallery sometimes invites readers to suggest names for characters or pets, then promises to include in a book the last name of the reader who made a suggestion she chose. The name Bay was suggested for one of the dogs by a reader with the last name Szymanski, who was sure Susan would never use her name in a book. Not only did Susan use it, but for a main character, which means it appears prominently in the cover copy. What did you think when you first read this last name? How did you pronounce it? Why do you think Harper kept her ex-husband's last name instead of going back to Bloom? Have you ever seen your last name in a book?

*Join the mailing list at SusanMallery.com to receive an email when Susan releases a new *Mischief Bay* novel.*

Potatoes Grand Mere

ala Harper Szymanski

4 baking potatoes, peeled and cut into
 $\frac{1}{8}$ " slices

Salt and pepper

2 Tbsp butter

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup diced onion

1 clove garlic, minced

2 Tbsp flour

1 tsp dry mustard

1 cup half-and-half

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup shredded parmesan cheese,
divided



Layer potatoes in a greased 8-inch square baking dish, seasoning each layer with salt and pepper to taste. Melt the butter over low heat in a medium saucepan. Sauté the onions until translucent. Add garlic. Mix together the flour and dry mustard, then sprinkle over the onion mixture, stirring thoroughly. Add milk a little at a time, stirring constantly, until thickened. Remove from heat and stir in half the cheese. Pour over the potatoes.

Cover and bake at 350 for 45 minutes. Remove the cover, add the rest of the cheese, and bake until cheese is golden brown, about 15 minutes longer.

Strawberry Avocado Salad

6 cups baby spinach

1 cup fresh strawberries, sliced

1 avocado, diced

2 oz parmesan cheese, sliced

¼ cup chopped pecans

Balsamic vinegar and olive oil to taste

Salt and pepper to taste

Toss the spinach through pecans. Serve with vinegar, oil, salt and pepper.

