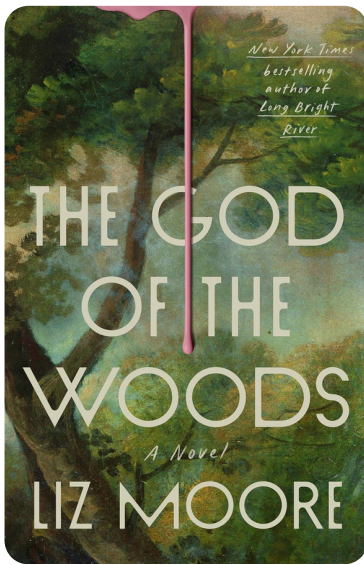




THE GOD OF THE WOODS



*Book Club
Discussion Guide*



FAMILY SECRETS & GENERATIONAL TRAUMA

1. The Van Laar family's legacy looms large over every character. How does the family's history shape the events that unfold decades later?
2. Do you think the parents' actions were driven more by guilt or by a need to protect their image?
3. How do unspoken truths and silence function as forms of violence in this family?
4. What parallels do you see between the Van Laars and real families in positions of power?
5. If the family had been forced to face the truth earlier, do you think the ending would have been different?



CLASS DIVIDE & POWER

1. How does the book portray the imbalance between the wealthy Van Laar family and the working-class locals?
2. Which characters best represent how class affects perception of guilt and innocence?
3. What moments in the novel made you most aware of how privilege distorts justice?
4. Do you think Liz Moore intended this to be a critique of wealth and American elitism, or something more personal?
5. How does the camp setting amplify this class tension — especially between the kids and the counselors?



THE WILDERNESS & SETTING AS CHARACTER

1. The Adirondack woods feel almost alive in the story. How does nature reflect or intensify the emotional state of the characters?
2. The woods seem both a place of freedom and danger — which do you think wins out by the end?

3. Did you interpret the forest as symbolic of truth, chaos, or something else entirely?
4. How would the story change if it were set somewhere urban instead of isolated in nature?



MOTHERHOOD & GENDER ROLES

1. The novel presents very different kinds of mothers — protective, absent, complicit. Which depiction resonated most with you, and why?
2. How does motherhood intersect with class and power in the Van Laar family?
3. Do you think the female characters have more moral clarity than the men, or are they equally compromised?
4. How does the book portray the emotional labor of women compared to men's attempts at control?



MYSTERY, TRUTH & MEMORY

1. The story shifts through multiple timelines and perspectives — how did that affect your understanding of the truth?
2. What do you think Liz Moore wanted readers to question about memory itself?
3. How does the novel show that truth isn't absolute — that every version of it depends on who's telling the story?
4. Did you find the ending satisfying in terms of resolving the mystery, or did the emotional revelations matter more to you?
5. What do you think truth costs, in the world of this book?



GUILT, SHAME & DENIAL

1. Which character do you think carries the heaviest guilt — and do they ever find release from it?
2. The Van Laars seem to bury both people and emotions. How does denial function as a survival mechanism here?
3. How did you interpret the ways grief and shame are passed down across generations?
4. What role does collective guilt play — not just for the family, but for the entire community?



CHILDHOOD, INNOCENCE & LOSS

1. Barbara's disappearance is central, but her voice feels surprisingly strong through other people's memories. What does that say about how children are remembered by adults?
2. Do you think the children in this story ever had a chance at real innocence, or were they doomed by the adults' choices from the start?
3. How did you feel about the portrayal of childhood freedom versus adult control at the camp?
4. What emotions did the flashbacks to the kids' perspectives stir in you — nostalgia, fear, or something else?



STORYTELLING & STRUCTURE

1. How did the non-linear timeline affect your connection to the characters?
2. The novel builds tension slowly, then unravels everything at once — do you think that pacing worked?
3. What's one detail that seemed minor at first but hit hard once you reached the end?
4. How does Liz Moore use structure to show that truth isn't discovered all at once but pieced together through perspective?



REFLECTION & INTERPRETATION

1. What do you think The God of the Woods actually refers to — a literal idea, a metaphor, or something psychological?
2. Which emotion lingered with you after finishing — grief, anger, forgiveness, or relief?
3. If you could ask one character a single question, who would it be and what would you ask?
4. Did the ending change your perception of who the “victims” really were?
5. What do you think the author wants readers to take away about power, silence, and the stories we tell to protect ourselves?



Bored to Death
Book club

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