



Discussion Questions

Martha's Vineyard Beach and Bookclub

By Martha Hall Kelly

1. The Martha's Vineyard Beach and Book Club has a contemporary storyline set in 2016 framing the story, but the majority of the novel follows the Smith sisters during World War II. Why do you think Martha Hall Kelly chose to add a contemporary thread to the novel? Were you surprised by how the two storylines came together in the end?
2. Many historical fiction novels set during World War II are set in Europe. But The Martha's Vineyard Beach and Book Club is set on US shores. Were you aware of war efforts happening off the coast of Martha's Vineyard? Did it change your understanding of American soldiers during this specific time in history?
3. Kelly populates the book with very strong female

characters. Which character's journey resonated with you the most? Why?

4. The inspiring power of book clubs and storytelling is a big theme in the narrative. What other overarching themes did you notice?

5. How did the wartime book club that Cadence and Bess start prompt change for women in their community? How do you think the books they chose to read influenced these changes?

6. Bess, Cadence's best friend and her brother Tom's girlfriend, comes from a wealthy family but left that life of privilege behind to work the land and live with the Smith sisters and Gram. Why do you think she did that? What did she learn?

7. How does the arrival of the U.S. Army shake things up for the Smith sisters and their neighbors on the island? What are the consequences of the Smith family hiding the mysterious soldier who washes up on their shores?

8. Cadence's love interest in the novel is a British serviceman, Major Gilbert. What secrets are they both

hiding from each other, and how did you feel their story was resolved?

9. Briar has a great interest in submarines and is convinced that she's seeing them offshore even though no one believes her. How does her interest in the war shape her actions and decisions?

10. What are some key moments of growth for the main characters? How do they change throughout the novel?

11. What does the setting of Martha's Vineyard symbolize for the characters in both time periods? How does the island setting influence the story?

12. What message do you think the author is trying to impart about female friendships and family?

13. If you've read Martha Hall Kelly's historical fiction previously, how did this novel compare to her others?

Discussion questions by the publisher

PrincetonBookReview.com

