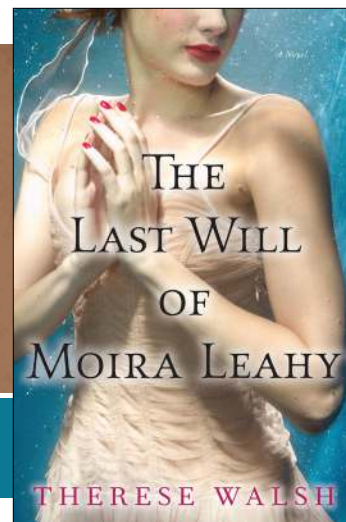


THE LAST WILL OF MOIRA LEAHY

by Therese Walsh

DISCUSSION GROUP GUIDE



ABOUT THIS GUIDE . . .

The introduction, discussion questions, suggestions for further reading, and author biography that follow are intended to enhance your group's reading of Therese Walsh's debut novel, *The Last Will of Moira Leahy*.

In order to provide reading groups with the most informed and thought-provoking questions possible, it is necessary to reveal important aspects of the plot of this book—as well as the ending. If you have not finished reading The Last Will of Moira Leahy, we respectfully suggest that you may want to wait before reviewing this guide.

ABOUT THIS BOOK . . .

Maeve Leahy lost her twin sister, Moira, to tragedy nearly a decade ago, at the tender age of sixteen. Since then, she's repressed their conjoined dreams of touring internationally to promote their music and become a workaholic professor of languages at Betheny University. She has mastered the ability to press onward in "safe" directions, knowing that staying busy will prevent her from dredging up her painful past or forging a present that might invite a different kind of heartache.

That is, until one lonely night at an auction house, when she spies something that reminds her of her carefree, piratical youth: a Javanese dagger called a keris. Sure, the keris is linked to mysterious myths and lore, but Maeve doesn't believe in any of that,

and places the winning bid. Soon after, a book about Javanese weaponry is nailed to her office door, followed by other anonymous notes, one inviting her to Rome to learn more about the blade. There she learns that nothing can be taken at face value—including the face she's been presenting to the world—and that the keris might play a role in slicing away her many self-protective layers, once and for all.

A haunting novel about the power of love and acceptance, *The Last Will of Moira Leahy* may leave readers pondering whether they've remained open to all that life has to offer.

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT . . .

1. What do you think the water in Maeve's dreams symbolized? How does it represent her fears or desires?
2. Jack Leahy proclaimed that Maeve's eyes were blue like the sky and Moira's were blue like the sea. Did you, too, see one of the twins as being more earth-bound than the other? Did that dynamic change at all throughout the course of the novel?
3. What do you think about Abby's decision to promote separate identities for the twins? How did this decision affect her and her daughters? In what other ways might she have encouraged individuality?



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- How do the interactions between Maeve and other characters support her emotional progress throughout the story? Who affected her, and how?
- Is there more than one villain in this story? If so, who?
- Maeve learns a lot about herself by following the notes left for her. What was each of these lessons? How do you think they worked to heal her in the end?
- How did Moira's perception of herself change after taking Ian's saxophone stone? Do you think her personality changed at the core? Why or why not?
- How might Maeve and Moira's story have been different if Ian Bronya had never moved into the house next door? Do you think the twins would've been able to live the idyllic life they'd dreamed for themselves?
- How does change of setting—Castine to Betheny to Rome to Castine—influence the different portions of the book? Do the landscapes through which Maeve travels help her on her inner journey as well?
- Maeve suffers psychically by denying important parts of her past and her core self. Do you think Maeve's revisiting her past in such a personal way was necessary in order for her to live a full present and have a rich future? Do you think it's common for people to forget about closure, in general, and if so, is it a harmful human trait? Why or why not? (Feel free to share personal stories with one another, as befits your comfort level.)
- Several characters urged Maeve to “believe, believe” throughout the course of the novel. How did you interpret this message? Why do you think Maeve resisted giving into it for so long? Do you think she could've healed without belief?
- How was Noel an essential part of Maeve's healing journey? What did he represent for her? And how did the story of Noel and his mother relate to the larger picture?
- How did the keris affect Maeve, if at all? What do you think held the key to its “power”?
- Do we all need a little ‘magic’ sometimes to step past our everyday coping strategies and face the truth? Is that what magic really is?
- Several fictional characters were referenced throughout the course of this novel, including Castine's drummer boy ghost, Jane Eyre, the five Chinese brothers, Cinderella, and Alvilda. How did the mention of these other characters affect your reading experience? How did they tie in with Maeve and Moira's journey?
- Have you ever known twins? Do they have a stronger sibling bond? Do you believe they can communicate at deeper levels than those of us not so connected?
- Do you think Moira's last gesture will influence Maeve's life in the end? How?
- How did acceptance play a role in *The Last Will of Moira Leahy*? How did a lack of acceptance cause problems for each major character?
- What similarities, if any, did you notice between the sisters—Maeve and Moira—and the brothers—Sri Putra and Ermanno? In which ways were they different? Can you relate these sibling relationships to the story's themes?
- Consider the theme “not everything is as it seems.” Which characters were more than they appeared? How did their different motivations affect the story? Did everyone eventually show his or her true self?

