



Discussion Guide

Girls in Trucks by Katie Crouch

- To be a member of the Camellia Society, one has to be born into it. How do the themes of "membership" and exclusivity play out in *Girls in Trucks*? What would you say the "dues" are for being a Camellia?
- One of the implicit goals of the Camellia Society—as is particularly evident in the Cotillion dances—is to prepare its young ladies for marriage. Over the course of the novel, how does her Camellia upbringing prepare Sarah Walters for dating, courtship, and love?
- Love is manifested in many different ways in the book, sometimes tragically. Which examples surprised you? Why do you think Sarah seems to have such bad luck with men?
- Sarah's older sister, Eloise, is the black sheep of the family. How does she differ from Sarah and how is she similar? How does Sarah see Eloise as a model—either to follow or not to follow?
- Later on in the novel, Sarah is invited to a party at her friend Bitsy's. She attends, even though she didn't always get along with Bitsy, because Camellias are "friends for life." What do you think of this die-hard loyalty? How do Sarah's attitudes toward Bitsy and Charlotte change?
- There is a distinction made by some of the Camellia matrons between what is decorous and "civilized" and what is "common." When in the novel does this distinction begin to break down—or become subverted entirely?
- One of the sayings from Sarah's youth is "Once a Camellia, always a Camellia." To what extent does this mantra hold true for Sarah?

- Sarah heads North for college, in part to escape the Camellia Society. Does she succeed?
- In many ways, this is a novel about home. When she's living in New York, how is Sarah pulled toward home and toward the past?
- One of the curveballs that life throws at Sarah is that she has a baby by a man she hardly knows. How does having this child change her? Were you surprised by this turn of events?
- Another surprise of the book is Sarah's mother's relationship with her lifelong friend, Georgia. How would you reconcile Sarah's mother's staunch Southern gentility with this unconventional romance?
- Toward the end of the book we meet J.T., a classic Southern man from Sarah's youth, with the truck to prove it. How does J.T. differ from the other men in the novel, and why is Sarah drawn to him—is it just nostalgia or something deeper?
- If you had to write an epilogue to the book, how would you imagine Sarah's life five years from now?

A Message from Katie Crouch

When I heard that *Girls in Trucks* was a Red Hat Society Pick, I couldn't stop smiling, because it made me realize that I had succeeded in creating the book I wanted to write. The Red Hat Society embodies so much I admire. Pluckiness, fun, friendship, a dedication to embracing life in the moment. The spirit of the women who wear purple is what Sarah Walters, the book's heroine, strives to learn throughout her youth, even though she makes an incredible amount of mistakes while getting there.



Sarah makes more bad choices than your average girl. She falls for the wrong men, takes the wrong jobs, obsesses over aspects of life that, in the end, don't really matter. What does matter, she eventually finds, are her lifelong friendships, and appreciating love and laughter in the moment. I'm not going to tell you how she comes to this conclusion (I want you to read the book!), but it's a roundabout ride, involving a few drunken debutante balls, a trip to Peru, a bus accident, and of course, a man in a pickup truck. It's a life led by a woman who, no doubt, is destined to live large and top off her purple outfit with a big red hat. I am thrilled that the members of Red Hat Society will be enjoying this book.