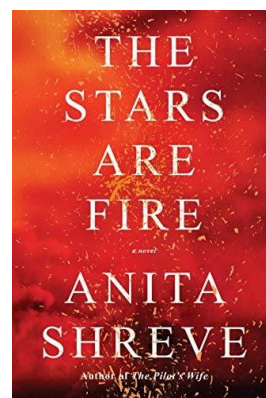


Discussion Questions

The Stars are Fire

Anita Shreve



1. This epigraph is a quote from Shakespeare's Hamlet: "Doubt thou the stars are fire;/ Doubt thou the sun doth move;/ Doubt truth to be a liar;/ But never doubt I love." What does it mean? What does it have to do with the novel it introduces?
2. "Containerize, her own mother once told Grace, as if imparting the secret of sanity. Her mother meant children as well as dry goods." In what ways does Grace follow this advice? When does she disregard it?
3. Grace intends to seduce Gene, but the results are degrading and painful. If the novel were set in the present day, might this be a means for legal action? How are marital disputes viewed differently from in the 1940s?
4. Discuss Grace's relationship with Rosie. Why is this friendship so important to Grace? What hole does Rosie fill in Grace's life?
5. After the fire and losing her baby, Grace believes Gene used the chaos as a means to leave the family. What makes her think this?
6. What do you think would have happened to Grace and the children if Marjorie hadn't found them?
7. Why do Matthew and Joan take in Grace and the children? How does their action help her to heal?
8. Why do you think Merle hid her jewelry where she did? What would have happened to Grace and the children if Grace hadn't found the jewelry?
9. The novel ends on a serendipitous note. Did you find it satisfying?
10. What advice would you give Grace that would have helped her on this journey?