



## Book club 15: Family & identity

*This Summer's Secrets*  
by Emily Barr

### Rules

In this book club you will discuss *This Summer's Secrets* by Emily Barr in a group of 4-6 readers. The book club opens with a brief introduction that one of you reads out loud. The book club then continues in four rounds:

- 1 Round 1 consists of 5 questions about the plot. One of the group members acts as the quiz master who reads each question out loud, after which everyone (including the quiz master) writes down their answer. The correct answers will appear on the screen after you have turned over the final question card. You may then check your answers and calculate your scores.
- 2 Round 2 consists of asking and answering questions each of you have about the book/story. Each group member consults the group about elements of the text that they thought was unclear. Together, you try to find answers to the questions that are raised. After everything has been cleared up, your group is ready to proceed to the next round.
- 3 Round 3 consists of discussion questions. The person with the most correct answers to the quiz questions from round 1 gets to be the first to turn over a card and respond to the question. The other members of the group may then add to the discussion by responding and sharing their ideas. Take turns until all cards are flipped.
- 4 Round 4 is where you get to review the text. How many stars would you give the text and why? Discuss this together until you have reached a shared verdict. Use the text box to explain your choice.

This book club was developed by the editors of LitLab, a digital laboratory for high school literature research. For more teaching materials, visit [www.litlab.nl](http://www.litlab.nl). A teacher's guide and a didactic justification of this teaching method are available at [www.litlab.nl/docenten](http://www.litlab.nl/docenten).



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## *This Summer's Secrets*

### Introduction

*'Here is Cornwall's most haunted house - Cliff House,' Josie said. 'It stands empty and troubled on the edge of the cliff. No one alive knows what this haunted house is hiding.'*

Cliff House is closed off for most of the year until its rich owners from London come down to Cornwall for the summer. This year, Senara finds herself pulled into this world of wealth and beautiful people. She even falls in love for the first time. But Cliff House and its owners are hiding things. They have been hiding things for too long and now, despite (*ondanks*) all their efforts (*inspanningen*), their secrets are coming out. Secrets that involve Senara's friends and her family in a way she could never have imagined.

In this book club you are invited to discuss how family histories, including their secrets, continue to determine (*bepalen*) who we are today.

### Round 1: **Understanding the plot**

Take turns turning over a card and answering the question. After the person whose turn it is has answered, the rest may add to that answer or share their own views.

### Round 2: **Initial questions**

Take turns selecting one of the excerpts (*fragmenten/ stukjes*) from the book listed below. Think of a question you would like to ask one of the characters, and work together to find an answer to that question.

1. Felicity, Jenna and two-year-olds Clementine and Senara are in the garden of Cliff House: 'When Felicity... the camellias.' (p. 9)
2. Because of her mother's problems Josie is taking care of her instead of the other way around: 'The kitchen was... to study.' (p. 15-16)
3. Martha is taken from her London home to Cornwall because of the war: 'Martha Driscoll... of her.' (p. 17)

### Round 3: **Discussion**

Take turns turning over a card from a pile of your choice and answer the discussion question. The other members of the group may then add to the discussion by responding and sharing their ideas.

### Round 4: **Opinion**

Review *This Summer's Secrets* by rating the novel on a scale of one to five stars, and then provide an explanation for your choice. Discuss what aspects you enjoyed and what aspects you didn't, and provide reasons for your opinions. Reflect on whether the discussion influenced your individual perspective, and if so, how. Incorporate examples and arguments from your responses to the discussion questions to support your review.



### Question 1

Who is Josie's boyfriend at the beginning of the book?

### Question 2

Meg and Rik are family, in what way?

### Question 3

What is Clem's mother's job?

### Question 4

How is Andy related to (*familie van*) Josie?

### Question 5

What happened in the war made Aubrey sick. What is his sickness called?

### Answers

- 1 Gareth
- 2 They are twins.
- 3 Baker
- 4 Andy is her uncle/her mother's brother.
- 5 Shell shock



Question

3

Question

2

Question

1

Answers

Question

5

Question

4



### Personal connections? 1

At one point Rik wants to tell Senara about his feelings for her. He does not get to tell her because of a miscommunication between the two. Do you understand why they both have difficulty talking about their true feelings? Have you ever been in a similar situation?

### Personal connections? 2

Although Senara doesn't really like Clementine at first, they do become friends. Why is Senara interested in Clementine? And why does she also feel a little bit uncomfortable about this friendship?

### Personal connections? 3

There are many characters in the book. If you could become friends with one of them, who would that be and why?

### Personal connections? 4

Are there any taboos, topics everyone prefers not to discuss, in your own family? You do not have to share what these topics are if you don't want to, but could you explain in general how they affect you or your family?

### Personal connections? 5

In the end of the book, Senara inherits Cliff House. Clementine always thought that Cliff House was going to stay in her family so she is angry and very jealous. Do you ever feel jealous when your friends do or get things you would like to do or have yourself?

### Personal connections? 6

There is a difference in the way Meg and Josie deal with their sexuality. Meg is very open about being bi, Josie is mostly confused when she falls in love with a girl for the first time. Consider these two different attitudes towards sexuality and discuss how being gay is approached in your personal surroundings.



Personal connections?

3

Personal connections?

2

Personal connections?

1

Personal connections?

6

Personal connections?

5

Personal connections?

4



### Food for thought? 1

When they were children and didn't know each other very well, Clementine called Josie, Gareth and Senara 'peasants'. Why do Josie, Gareth and Senara feel so offended by this word?

### Food for thought? 2

Josie writes letters to her uncle Andy in Thailand. He never writes back, but the letters are very important for Josie. Why is that? What do these letters mean to Josie?

### Food for thought? 3

When they first meet, Rik thinks that Senara is one of the maids (*kamermeisjes*) of Cliff House. This is, of course, very embarrassing for both of them. This theme of class difference (*verschil in sociale klasse*) is found often in the book, for example, in Martha's situation. Can you explain how these class differences shape the relationships between the characters?

### Food for thought? 4

In the book, two deaths are covered up. Of course, the best thing to do is go to the police after an accidental (*per ongeluk*) killing. But here, all the characters involved have their reasons not to call the police. For each character, discuss the reasons for covering up a death.

### Food for thought? 5

There are four points of view in the book; Martha's, Josie's, Senara's and Felicity's. Why do you think the writer did this? And what point of view was the best one for you to read? Explain your answer.

### Food for thought? 6

In the book, two families are torn apart (*uit elkaar gescheurd*) by domestic abuse (Rachel's family) or sexual abuse (Josie's family). Explain the consequences of these types of abuse for all characters involved, both from Josie's generation and from the generation of her mum and uncle.



Food for thought?

3

Food for thought?

2

Food for thought?

1

Food for thought?

6

Food for thought?

5

Food for thought?

4