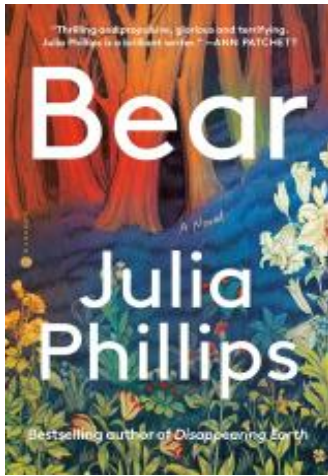


# Bear

by Julia Phillips

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## About the Book

**A mesmerizing novel of two sisters whose lives are upended by an unexpected visitor --- a tale of family, obsession and a mysterious creature in the woods, by the celebrated, bestselling author of DISAPPEARING EARTH.**

*They were sisters, and they would last past the end of time.*

Sam and Elena dream of another life. On the island off the coast of Washington where they were born and raised, they and their mother struggle to survive. Sam works on the ferry that delivers wealthy mainlanders to their vacation homes, while Elena bartends at the local golf club. But even together they can't earn enough to get by, stirring their frustration about the limits that shape their existence.

Then one night on the boat, Sam spots a bear swimming the dark waters of the channel. Where is it going? What does it want? When the bear turns up by their home, a terrified Sam is more convinced than ever that it's time to leave the island. But Elena responds differently to the massive beast. Enchanted by its presence, she throws into doubt the desire to escape and puts their long-held dream in danger.

A story about the bonds of sisterhood and the mysteries of the animals that live among us --- and within us --- BEAR is a propulsive, mythical, richly imagined novel from one of the most acclaimed young writers in America.

## Discussion Guide

1. The bear is a central figure in the story. What symbolic meanings or interpretations can you draw from its presence and actions throughout the novel?

2. How does the Pacific Northwest island setting shape the sisters' identities and their views on the world?
3. How do Sam and Elena's perspectives evolve throughout the novel, especially with their opposing reactions to the bear?
4. Which character did you relate to the most? Why?
5. Discuss the unraveling of Sam and Elena's dream of escape. Did Elena betray Sam by abandoning their plan? Or did Sam take their imaginings too seriously?
6. When did you feel like Elena had crossed the line with the bear?
7. What do you think Julia Phillips is trying to convey about the relationship between humans and nature, and the impact of the natural world on our lives?
8. What passages or scenes from the book will stay with you longest?
9. How do the portrayal of poverty and the sisters' relationship with their mother impact Sam and Elena's dreams, decisions and the overall narrative?
10. What elements does *Bear* share with classic fairy tales?
11. Discuss the ending. How did it impact your interpretation of the story's themes and character arcs? Why do you think the author ended the novel this way?
12. If you could ask the author any question about this book, what would it be?

## Author Bio

Julia Phillips is the bestselling author of the novels *BEAR* and *DISAPPEARING EARTH*, which was a finalist for the National Book Award and one of *The New York Times Book Review's* 10 Best Books of the Year. A 2024 Guggenheim fellow, she lives with her family in Brooklyn.

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### **Bear**

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