

Girls in Trucks

by Katie Crouch



About the Book

Sarah Walters is a less-than-perfect debutante. She tries hard to follow the time-honored customs of the Charleston Camellia Society, as her mother and grandmother did, standing up straight in Cotillion class and attending lectures about all the things that Camellias don't do (like ride with boys in pickup trucks).

But Sarah can't quite ignore the barbarism just beneath all that propriety, and as soon as she can she leaves South Carolina for a life in New York City. There, she and her fellow displaced Southern friends try to make sense of city sophistication, to understand how much of their training applies to real life and how much to the strange and rarefied world they've left behind.

When life's complications become overwhelming, Sarah returns home to confront with matured eyes the motto "Once a Camellia, always a Camellia" --- and to see how much fuller life can be, for good and for ill, among those who know you best.

Girls in Trucks introduces a narrative voice that is astonishing and irresistible --- a true, sweet, and wise voice that heralds the arrival of an exciting new talent.

Discussion Guide

1. 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?

2. 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?
3. 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?
4. 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?
5. 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?
6. 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?
7. 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?
8. Sarah heads North for college, in part to escape the Camellia Society. Does she succeed?
9. 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?
10. 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?
11. 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?
12. 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?
13. If you had to write an epilogue to the book, how would you imagine Sarah's life five years from now?

Author Bio

Katie Crouch is the *New York Times* bestselling author of *GIRLS IN TRUCKS*, *MEN AND DOGS, ABROAD* and *EMBASSY WIFE*. She has also written essays for *The New York Times*, *Glamour*, *The Guardian*, *Slate*, *Salon* and *Tin House*. A former resident of Namibia and San Francisco, Crouch now lives in Vermont with her family and teaches

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