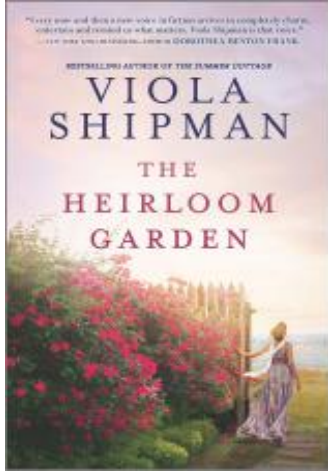

The Heirloom Garden

by Viola Shipman



About the Book

In her inimitable style, Viola Shipman explores the unlikely relationship between two very different women brought together by the pain of war, but bonded by hope, purpose, and flowers.

Iris Maynard lost her husband in World War II, her daughter to illness and, finally, her reason to live. Walled off from the world for decades behind the towering fence surrounding her home, Iris has built a new family of flowers. Iris propagates her own daylilies and roses while tending to a garden filled with the heirloom starts that keep the memories of her loved ones alive.

When Abby Peterson moves next door with her family --- a husband traumatized by his service in the Iraq War and a young daughter searching for stability --- Iris is reluctantly yet inevitably drawn into her boisterous neighbor's life, where, united by loss and a love of flowers, she and Abby tentatively unearth their secrets, and help each other discover how much life they have yet to live.

With delightful illustrations and fascinating detail, Viola Shipman's heartwarming story will charm readers while resonating with issues that are so relevant today.

Discussion Guide

1. Do you garden? What type of gardens do you have? Were any of your family gardeners? What heirloom flowers or plants do you have that have been passed on by family or friends?
2. Whether or not you garden, do you have a favorite flower? Why? Is there a special memory associated with it, or is it simply the beauty of the flower you love? Do you have a favorite growing season?

3. Iris uses her garden as a way of honoring and remembering the people she has loved and lost. What do you love most about gardening? Do you make floral arrangements for your home or your friends? And how does it help you --- mentally, physically, spiritually, creatively?
4. Have you or has anyone in your family served in the military? What does your or their service mean to you? How has it impacted you and your family? How have you or they been impacted by their service? Discuss.
5. Do you think Americans demonstrate enough respect for our veterans and their service and sacrifices? Why or why not? How could we do better?
6. Have you ever had a boss or colleague disrespect you? If you are a woman in a career that is male-dominated, how do you manage prejudiced and antiquated attitudes? And do you think our society and corporate world has gotten better in its treatment of women in the workplace and such issues as job discrimination, equal pay, promotions, etc.? Discuss.
7. Overcoming loss is a major theme in *THE HEIRLOOM GARDEN*. Have you ever lost someone close to you? How has that impacted you? Do you think you handled grief in a healthy way? Is there any "one" right way to grieve?
8. Cory is initially very resistant to seeking professional help, believing he can handle things on his own. Do you think asking for help is a sign of weakness or strength? Have you ever sought therapy? Did you find it helpful?
9. Do you think certain family and small town community values and traditions are being lost today --- be it gardening, parades, or simply being neighborly and checking in on one another? Why or why not? Discuss.
10. One of the most important relationships in the story is the friendship between Iris and Lily, which transcends age or experience. Do you think our younger generations still respect and learn from our elders? Do you think our family stories and heirlooms are being shared or forgotten? How will this impact our country and our future generations? Discuss.

Author Bio

Viola Shipman is a pen name for Wade Rouse, a popular award-winning memoirist. Rouse chose his grandmother's name, Viola Shipman, to honor the woman whose heirlooms and family stories inspire his writing. Rouse divides his time between Michigan and California, writes regularly for *People and Coastal Living* and is a contributor to "All Things Considered." He is the bestselling author of *THE CHARM BRACELET*, *THE HOPE CHEST*, *THE RECIPE BOX*, *THE SUMMER COTTAGE*, *THE HEIRLOOM GARDEN*, *THE CLOVER GIRLS*, *THE SECRET OF SNOW*, *THE EDGE OF SUMMER*, *A WISH FOR WINTER*, *FAMOUS IN A SMALL TOWN* and *THE WISHING BRIDGE*.

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