



Discussion Guide: The Summer Kitchen by Lisa Wingate

1. What was unique about the setting of the Summer Kitchen? Can you imagine the setting here in Waco? How did it enhance or take away from the story?
2. Do the characters seem real and believable? Can you relate to their predicaments? To what extent do they remind you of yourself or someone you know?
3. Did certain parts of *The Summer Kitchen* make you uncomfortable? If so, why did you feel that way? Did this lead to a new understanding or awareness of some aspect of your life you might not have thought about before?
4. In *The Summer Kitchen*, Sandra seems to regret having given up some of the dreams she held as a young woman. At forty-nine, she feels that she hasn't achieved all she wanted to. Do you think we all feel this, in some sense? What is your greatest achievement? Your greatest regret?
5. When Sandra sees the children in the Dumpster, she initially fails to recognize their needs, and when she does recognize them she tries to convince herself to leave them to social agencies. Why does she react this way? What barriers prevent us from recognizing the needs of the people around us, or from doing something bold to address them? Do you think one person can make a difference?
6. Cass repeatedly struggles with whether to share the sandwiches and other food with Angel, Ronnie, and Boo. Why does she hesitate? Why does she eventually decide to hand over the food?
7. What drew Cass to Red Bird Street to wait for the "Sandwich Lady?" Did she make small talk with Sandra only because she wanted the sandwiches?
8. Cass wishes she were older and Sandra wishes she were younger. Why do we often have such a hard time living in the moment and being happy where we are? Was there ever a time in your life when you felt you were in just the right place?
9. Discuss what Sandra meant when she said, "*It never occurred to me, while I was rallying to help those less fortunate, that fortunes can turn at any time and only then do you find out what you're made of, what's beneath the surface.*" P172
10. Why do you think Holly fell so easily into running the food kitchen and even wanted to expand it?
11. SandraKaye said, "*Nothing really happens by accident. There is a plan, even when we don't see it, even when it's nothing we would have guessed. There is a purpose for broken houses and broken people.*" P354 Do you think that the choices people make always determined what happens to them? Do you think that sometimes people are victims of their circumstances? Were the hardships Cass endured part of a plan to lead her to a better place?

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