

Reading Group Guide for Port Anna

by Libby Buck

1. Following the loss of her job and relationship, Gwen returns to the place where she suffered a life-altering tragedy, a site of tremendous pain. In your opinion, what made it almost inevitable that she would be drawn there?
2. In Port Anna, Gwen immediately encounters her childhood friends. Each of them has undergone significant changes, some in surprising ways. Have your oldest friends evolved over the years in similar ways? If so, how does this impact your adult relationship or your understanding of the person when they were young?
3. Hugh demonstrates from the start that he and Gwen have little in common. Why do you think she trusts him?
4. From the first chapter, Gwen finds solace in the various moods of the sea at her doorstep. As winter approaches, she spends time taking in the beauty of the frozen harbor and the frosted trees. How does this contribute to Gwen's evolving sense of herself and her new life?
5. Shania is an enigmatic figure in the first two parts of the book. What do you make of her once she starts to speak? How do you understand Gwen's fascination with her?
6. The community of Port Anna welcomes Gwen with open arms, but it is also a very small town. Early in the book, Gwen alludes to gossip: how news of her arrival spreads rapidly and that the old stories of her teenage escapades were common knowledge. This is a common trope of life in a remote, rural village. But was there anything you found surprising about the interactions between the residents of Port Anna?
7. Gwen talks a lot about the person that she was before the tragedy and the person she became after that. How do you understand those changes? Have you ever had an experience that severed one part of your life from the other?
8. Port Anna relies upon the financial support of summer visitors, the from-aways, people who spend considerable time there but who don't quite belong. This tension is a common situation in resort communities where outsiders arrive with unreasonable or foreign expectations of how things should be done. Have you ever had experience with a community like this? Was there anything unexpected in those interactions described in *Port Anna*?
9. There are several love stories embedded in the narrative. How many can you name? How do they serve Gwen and her new life? Which ones contribute best to her healing?
10. Some readers have characterized this book as a fairy tale. What elements of the story or the writing contribute to that interpretation?

