



Reading Group Guide / August 2019

[The All-Girl Filling Station's Last Reunion](#) by [Fannie Flagg](#)

ABOUT THE BOOK

In this new comic mystery novel, two women are forced to reimagine who they are. Mrs. Sookie Poole of Point Clear, Alabama, has just married off the last of her daughters and is looking forward to relaxing and perhaps traveling with her husband, Earle. The only thing left to contend with is her mother, the formidable Lenore Simmons Krackenberry. Lenore may be a lot of fun for other people, but is, for the most part, an overbearing presence for her daughter. Then one day, quite by accident, Sookie discovers a secret about her mother's past that knocks her for a loop and suddenly calls into question everything she ever thought she knew about herself, her family, and her future.

Sookie begins a search for answers that takes her to California, the Midwest, and back in time, to the 1940s, when an irrepressible woman named Fritzi takes on the job of running her family's filling station. Soon truck drivers are changing their routes to fill up at the All-Girl Filling Station. Then, Fritzi sees an opportunity for an even more groundbreaking adventure. As Sookie learns about the adventures of the girls at the All-Girl Filling Station, she finds herself with new inspiration for her own life.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Fannie Flagg's career started in the fifth grade when she wrote, directed, and starred in her first play, titled *The Whoopee Girls*, and she has not stopped since. At age nineteen she began writing and producing television specials, and later wrote for and appeared on *Candid Camera*. She then went on to distinguish herself as an actress and a writer in television, films, and the theater. She is the bestselling author of *Daisy Fay and the Miracle Man*; *Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Cafe*; *Welcome to the World, Baby Girl!*; *Standing in the Rainbow*; *A Redbird Christmas*; *Can't Wait to Get to Heaven*; *I Still Dream About You*; *The All-Girl Filling Station's Last Reunion*; and *The Whole Town's Talking*. Flagg's script for the movie *Fried Green Tomatoes* was nominated for an Academy Award and the Writers Guild of America Award and won the highly regarded Scriptor Award for best screenplay of the year. Fannie Flagg is the winner of the Harper Lee Prize. She lives happily in California and Alabama.

FOR DISCUSSION *The suggested questions are intended to help you find new and interesting angles and topics for discussion. May these ideas enrich your conversation and increase your enjoyment of the book.*

1. A lot of Southern identity is wrapped up in one's family history. "Now, just who are your people?" is an oft-quoted phrase around the region. Sookie's biggest crisis comes when she realizes that her "people" aren't actually who she thought they were. How does Sookie's discovery of her true family affect her identity? How does your own heritage affect your identity?
2. Though Sookie tells us that Lenore's nickname, "Winged Victory," came from the way she entered a room—as if she were the statuesque piece on the hood of a car rushing in—how might "Winged Victory" reflect Lenore's personality in other ways? Does her representation as a classical goddess serve to heighten the air of history and tradition that surrounds her? How might the image of a winged woman tie Lenore in with the ladies of the WASPs?
3. Though Sookie tells us that Lenore's nickname, "Winged Victory," came from the way she entered a room—as if she were the statuesque piece on the hood of a car rushing in—how might "Winged Victory" reflect Lenore's personality in other ways? Does her representation as a classical goddess serve to heighten the air of history and tradition that surrounds her? How might the image of a winged woman tie Lenore in with the ladies of the WASPs?
4. Sookie's best friend, Marvaleen, is constantly trying different suggestions from her life coach, Edna Yorba Zorbra. From journaling to yoga to the Goddess Within group, which meets in a yurt, Marvaleen tries every method possible to get over her divorce. How does Sookie's approach to dealing with her problems differ from Marvaleen's? Do you think her friendship with Marvaleen might have helped push her to confront the question of her mother?
5. In *The All-Girl Filling Station's Last Reunion*, we learn about a mostly unknown part of American history—the WASPs of World War II. These women went for thirty-five years without recognition because their records of service were sealed and classified. Were you surprised to learn about this? What parts of the WASPs' story spoke to you?
6. As Sookie comes to terms with her new identity, so must the rest of her family. Sookie's realization that "Dee Dee may not be a Simmons by birth, but she was certainly Lenore's granddaughter, all right" becomes a comforting thought. Have there been times in your life when you have felt so connected to people that you considered them family? What types of circumstances can create such a bond?

7. Sookie tells her friend one day, “I’m telling you, Dena, when you live long enough to see your children begin to look at you with different eyes, and you can look at them not as your children, but as people, it’s worth getting older with all the creaks and wrinkles.” Have you experienced this change yet with your own parents or children? If so, what were the circumstances in which you began to see them in a different light? How did this make your relationship even more special?

8. “Blue Jay Away,” Sookie’s brand-new invention, keeps Sookie’s house finches and chickadees fed, while also making Sookie famous. Who do you think have been the blue jays in Sookie’s own life? Has she learned to manage them successfully?

9. As author Pat Conroy says, Fannie Flagg can make even the Polish seem Southern. A large part of Southern and Polish identity is found in their culture—the food, the music, the values. What are some of the things that are unique to your culture? How do they help bring people together?

10. Throughout the book, Dee Dee and Lenore often represent many characteristics that Sookie finds frustrating about being a Simmons, such as the time Dee Dee had to be driven to the church in the back of a moving van so that her *Gone with the Wind* wedding dress wouldn’t be messed up. Once Sookie gains perspective on her family, however, she comes to love and accept Dee Dee’s obsession with their history. Have there been times when your own friends or family have frustrated you with their opinions? How were you able to gain perspective and accept their differences?

11. A major theme in this book is accepting your home. Sookie experiences a homecoming many times—after she first meets Fritzi and returns to Point Clear, when she goes to Lenore’s bedside at Westminster Village, and when she flies to Pulaski for the All-Girl Filling Station’s last reunion. What is your favorite part about going home? Who are the people who make home a home for you?