

BY GWYN GB

ISLANDS

BOOK GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Thank you for choosing Islands for your book group, I hope you enjoyed reading about Katherine, Margaret, John and their family.

To help you with your discussion, here's a short list of suggested prompts and some information for you to share over a cup of coffee or glass of wine.

Islands is an emotion charged story of love, regrets and loss, set against the real-life events of 2008 that shocked the island of Jersey. Katherine, is a successful business woman living and working in London. She's estranged from her husband and family and hiding from the pain of failed motherhood.

When a major murder and child abuse investigation launches in her home island of Jersey, the news shocks the island and brings the world's media to its idyllic shores. As the island of Jersey faces up to its hidden past, Katherine is forced to face up to hers. A letter arrives from the dying mother of her teenage friend – the friend whose death Katherine caused 32 years before. She knows she must return home and tell the truth; but Katherine isn't the only one with secrets... Will the truth heal or destroy her? Will she ever come to terms with what drove her away from the man she loved and the sister that needs her?

DISCUSSION TOPICS

1. What do you think the main theme/themes of *Islands* are?

2. How important do you think the back story of the abuse investigation in Jersey, is to the story as a whole?

3. Who is your favourite character and why?

4. Do you like the character of Katherine? Do you think she is selfish or tormented?

5. The relationship between Katherine and her mother is strained. Whose fault do you think that is – or is it nobody's fault?

6. The structure of *Islands* jumps between 2008 and the past so that the stories of the various characters gradually unfold. Do you think this type of structure helps tell the interwoven stories of several characters and builds tension or do you find it irritating and prefer a more linear story structure?

7. Did the story touch your emotions? Could you relate to Katherine and John's anguish over their repeated miscarriages?

8. The ending of *Islands* is left open, do John and Katherine get back together again – or not? Do you like this kind of open ending or would you have preferred knowing?

9. What do you think Katherine and John do after the end of this story time period?

10. Do you think families are good at communicating? If not, why not?

11. If this book was made into a movie, who would you cast as the characters?

12. What do you think of the title of the book? Why do you think the author chose it?

WHAT OTHER READERS SAY ABOUT ISLANDS ON AMAZON.CO.UK

"This is a powerful, well-told story that made me cry, a couple of times. It's also the story of secrets, misunderstandings and heartbreak. The different timelines slowly peel away Katherine's story to reveal what really happened to her friend Anne when they were sixteen-years-old and the reasons other's decisions were made. Reading this book reminded me of so many of my own hopes, dreams and plans when I was that age, especially when I think of some of the well-loved places so cleverly interwoven into this story."

"I've lived in Jersey most of my life and recall only too well how horrible it felt for the world's media to print dreadful inaccuracies brought about by the Haut de la Garenne investigation, as they described an island I didn't recognize. This book has been incredibly well researched and told from the perspective of two women who were brought up on the island and it felt like they gave a voice to those of us who watched with disbelief and shock as the news reports unfolded at that time."

"Fact or fiction? Past and present? A story that held me as not only for the reasons that it had me thinking that I loved the twists and turns but also the way the whole scenario was played out. Intermingling past and present and all set on a lovely island. Have visited Jersey many years ago and this brought back many places in it for me so could relate in some way to the island and think that was an added bonus for myself. Did wonder why some events happened the way they did and why the characters acted in certain ways, but family, secrets and bereavement come out in it. A bit of a haunting one for me in a way as a major miscarriage of justice played out in it too and emotional loss one book that I found hard to put down once started reading."

ABOUT JERSEY

Jersey is the largest of the Channel Islands, a Crown dependency and part of the British Isles - but not the UK. It has its own government, financial and legal systems, but the UK is constitutionally responsible for the defence of the island. Jersey also has its own currency, although the UK and Guernsey pounds are also acceptable.

Jersey is just 5 miles by 9 miles and only 14 miles from the French coast. You can actually see France from the east coast of the island. It has a heavy French influence and the local dialect, Jerriais, is similar to the Normandy dialect. However, the people of Jersey chose to be ruled by Great Britain and pledged their allegiance to the English Crown in the 13th century.

During the Second World War, Jersey was occupied by the Germans and many of the defensive structures built in those years are still evident, along with the Napoleonic towers built to defend Jersey from French invasions in past centuries.

Jersey has miles of sandy beaches, is said to be the warmest and most southerly part of the British Isles and has been a popular holiday destination for its beauty, beaches and history.

Contrary to popular belief, the majority of the population are not tax exiles and Jersey's finance industry now adheres to strict international guidelines with regard to transparency of money.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR GWYN GB

Gwyn grew up an avid reader and writer, completing her first novella before she was 14. Born in the UK, she decided to go into journalism and became a national TV newsreader and journalist, working for the BBC and ITN as well as freelancing for national newspapers and magazines.

Gwyn met her Jersey born husband in the UK and with their two young boys, dogs and goldfish they moved to the island.

Islands was Gwyn's first published novel.

You can find out more about Gwyn's books at www.gwyngb.com and you can also sign up to her Readers Club for free and receive a novella.

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ISBN-10: 0995516510

ISBN-13: 978-0995516519

In paperback, kindle and soon Audio book

Publisher: Chalky Dog Publishing

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