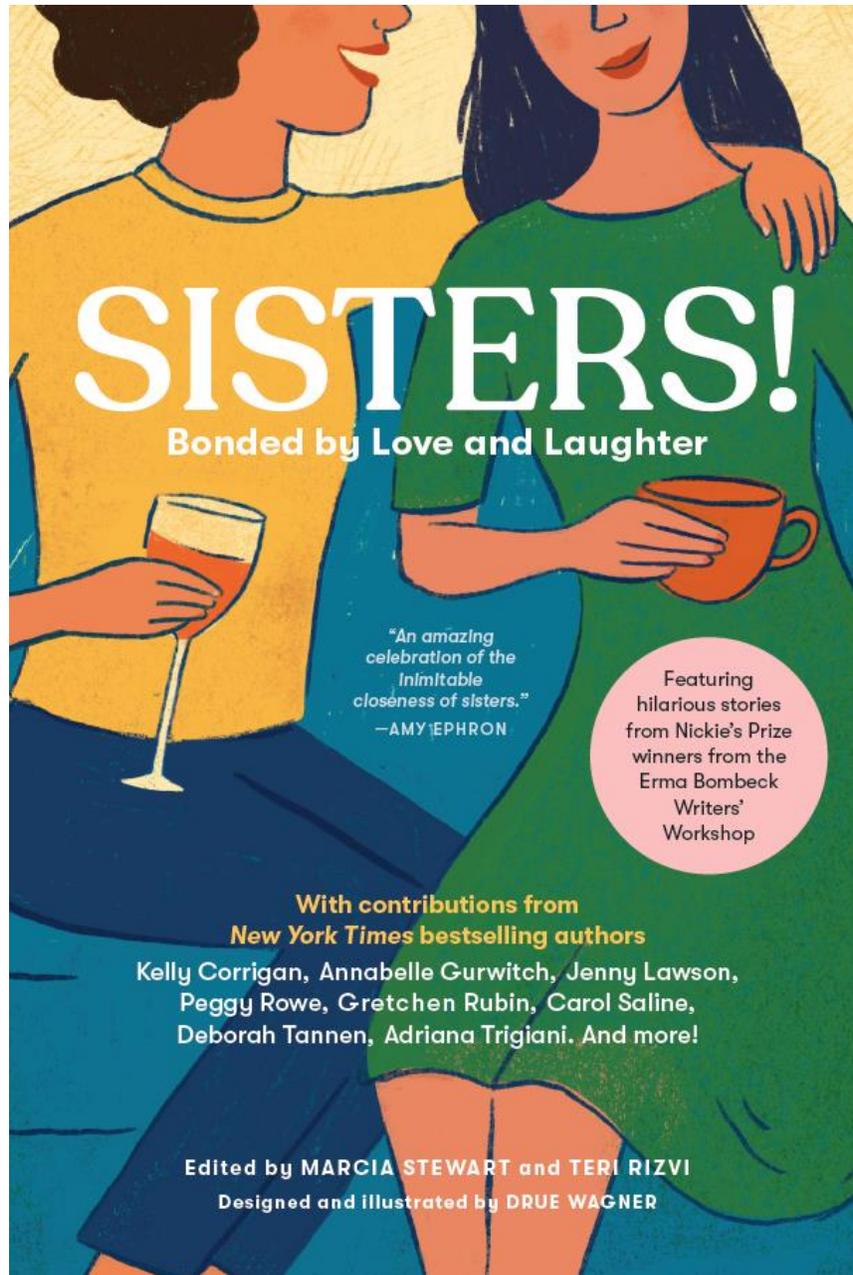


# **Book Club Guide for** ***Sisters! Bonded by Love and Laughter***



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# *Sisters!* Book Club Guide

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# *Sisters!* Book Club Guide

## Welcome to *Sisters! Bonded by Love and Laughter*

Congratulations on selecting *Sisters! Bonded by Love and Laughter* for your book club. This funny, heartwarming book includes dozens of essays and bits about sisters that are perfect for discussion, including:

- ◆ The intense emotional benefits of knowing you can count on a sister to have your back through all of life's ups and downs. You might especially enjoy Colleen Markley's essay, "Unflappably Calm, Occasionally Furious, Ready and Willing to Hide the Bodies" in Chapter 1, "The Bond of Sisterhood."
- ◆ The lengths to which younger sisters will go to win the favor and attention of older sisters. Don't miss Jackie Hostetler's "The Girls" or Peggy Rowe's "Do Not Hold It In" in Chapter 2, "Sisterly Pecking Order."
- ◆ How hilarious (often embarrassing) childhood incidents become a source of inside jokes and references for sisters in later years, a theme in Laurie Stone's "A Night to Remember...for All the Wrong Reasons" and the Deborah Tannen interview, "Laughing with Your Sister" in Chapter 4, "You Always Make Me Laugh."
- ◆ Ways in which sisters' relationships can change (often for the better) over time. Good examples are Annabelle Gurwitch's "You Can't Beat the Colonel" and Irene Tassy's "Dear Sis" in Chapter 5, "It's All Relative."
- ◆ Why many women describe their closest friends as "like sisters," with prime examples being Erma Bombeck's friendship with Mayva and Kelly Corrigan's heartfelt piece "Transcending: On Women and Friendship" (see Chapter 8, "Sisters of the Heart").

Your book group can focus on these general themes, or take advantage of the suggested discussion questions we've compiled. Most people will have a lot to say about their sisters, so depending on the type, size, and loquaciousness of your group, you might get through only a few of these questions—or find that some veer off in unexpected directions. That's often a good thing!

While your usual book club meeting might be more of a free-for-all, we suggest you appoint someone to lead the sisters' discussion. That will help keep things on track, encourage everyone to participate, and limit the degree to which over talkers/sharers can monopolize the conversation.

If your book club is a fairly small group of close friends, you probably already know who has a sister and who doesn't, who's close to their sister and who's not. Sadly, not everyone has a great relationship with their sister. Nevertheless, try to keep the conversation positive and fun, the focus of *Sisters! Bonded by Love and Laughter*.

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# *Sisters!* Book Club Guide

## Suggested Discussion Questions for *Sisters! Bonded by Love and Laughter*

All book clubs have their own personalities, so we've pulled together a selection of potential discussion questions for you to choose from.

1. What stood out to you after reading *Sisters!*?
2. How did reading this book make you feel about your own relationship with your sister?
3. Did you have a favorite essay, interview, or sister list?
4. Was there a particular piece that made you think, "That's my sister and me!"?
5. As described in many of the book's essays, sisters are often very different from each other. How are you and your sister alike (or different)? What do you admire most about your sister (and what not so much)?
6. Several essays, including Caroline Herschbach's "Adventure in a Small-Town Mall" (Chapter 2), focus on the big/little sister relationship. If you are an older sister, what did you like or not like about this role? How about if you were the younger sister?
7. "She always has my back" was the theme of several essays in the book. Can you think of times you felt your sister really stood up for you? How about times she let you down (maybe she got you in trouble with your parents by tattletaling)?
8. Is there some particular writer you want to read more of—whether a Nickie's Prize winner or a more established writer whose work appeared in the book, such as Adriani Trigiani or Peggy Rowe?
9. If you were to write a funny story about your own sister, such as a shared memory or inside joke, what would it be? Would you ever consider submitting it for publication?
10. This book is dedicated to the memory of a younger sister, an aspiring humor writer, who died soon after a cancer diagnosis. If you were to do a book or some other project to honor your own sister, what would it be?
11. Several women in *Sisters!* wrote essays about close friends they consider sisters by choice, not by blood. Do you relate to these? What do you think the differences are between a relationship with a close friend, as opposed to a biological sister?
12. The book also includes a few essays on brothers' relationships with their sisters. How do you feel these differ from sisters' relationships?

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13. If you don't have a sister or don't get along with your sister, how did you feel reading this book?
14. Which essay would best make a movie or TV show? And who would you cast in starring roles?
15. Is there any sister topic you wished the book covered?

## Sisterly Snacks

Part of the fun of many book clubs are all the delicious snacks and beverages. To keep with the book's focus, consider suggesting each person bring one of the favorite foods she shared with her sister when kids. (Expect a lot of candy and chips!) If you're into Italian food, check out Adriana Trigiani's cookbook/memoir, *Cooking with My Sisters: One Hundred Years of Family Recipes, from Italy to Big Stone Gap*,

discussed in Chapter 3. Don't worry—we won't give you Diana Aydin's Mom's chicken recipe, the dish that was so wrongly accused of causing food poisoning in Chapter 1's "Blame It on Mom's Chicken."



## Sister Songs

If your book club will be meeting in person, be sure to see the list of "Sister Songs" at the end of Chapter 4 to build a playlist for your event, such as Carly Simon's "Older Sister" and Cyndi Lauper's "Girls Just Want to Have Fun."

## Gift Ideas

You can find all kinds of sister gifts, from T-shirts to pillows, online or at local gift stores. If you liked *Sisters!*, consider buying a copy for the sisters in your life. For a special gift, check out our "Before 5" and "After 5" Sister Specials available at the [University of Dayton](#) bookstore. These include a copy of the book and either an Erma Bombeck coffee mug or wine glass.

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## **Thanks! And Please Share Your Thoughts on *Sisters!***

We hope your book club enjoyed *Sisters! Bonded by Love and Laughter* and that your gathering was full of love and laughter, too.

If you have a few moments, the many contributors to *Sisters!* would appreciate you writing a book review for Goodreads, Amazon and/or Barnes & Noble. Many readers use the ratings and reviews on these sites to find their next book, so we thank you for taking the time to rate and review *Sisters!* Proceeds from this book benefit the Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop Endowment Fund, which is used to keep the workshop affordable for writers, so the more positive reviews, the better.

If you'd like to share your comments with us directly, we'd love to get your feedback on *Sisters!* Just email us at [erma@udayton.edu](mailto:erma@udayton.edu). And be sure to include a photo of your book club reading the book. We'll share the best ones on social media.

