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SEND FOR ME

A novel

LAUREN FOX

"BEAUTIFULLY WRITTEN, DEEPLY FELT, TENDER AND THOUGHTFUL."
—THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW

Ingrid Isigloff



win Lauren L. Grief Walker

A NOTE FROM LAUREN FOX

Dear Reader,

I spent a lot of time with my grandparents when I was young. They came over every day after school, and we shared family dinners with them twice a week. All I knew about them was that they were the most loving, gentle people on the planet, and that, because of my grandparents' thick accents, most of my friends couldn't understand a word they said.

Family is the water you swim in. As a child, you move through its currents unaware of the temperature, oblivious to anything unusual. As I grew up, I learned our family's story—that they and my mother had fled Germany in 1938, leaving most of their family behind. Still, all I really understood was that my brother and I were loved—treasured—and that my grandparents didn't want to talk much about the past.

When I was in my twenties, not long after my grandparents had died, I discovered a small box in my parents' basement. In it were letters that my great-grandmother, Frieda, had written to my grandmother, Ilse, as they tried, with increasing desperation, to leave Germany. When I stumbled upon these letters, I knew without knowing that they were important. I set about the task of having them translated, and these letters—the story they tell and the sadness that overwhelms them—became the basis for my novel, *Send for Me*.

Send for Me is about four generations of a Jewish family, in Germany and Wisconsin. It's about the ways that the twin traumas of the Holocaust and separation linger and move through these generations, particularly among mothers and daughters.

The book is fiction—the characters, the details of their lives, their relationships, their fierce and complicated bonds are all products of my imagination. But the story of emigration and loss is my family's story, and the letters that weave through the book are my great-grandmother's own words.

I hope you'll take a look at *Send for Me*, and, if the novel resonates for you, please consider sharing it with your community.

Thank you!

Lauren Fox

Lauren Fox

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



The questions, discussion topics, and other material that follow are intended to enhance your group's conversation of Lauren Fox's *Send for Me*, a multigenerational novel cast against the backdrop of World War II Germany and contemporary Milwaukee, Wisconsin, wherein the lessons and loves passed down among mothers and daughters form powerful ties that neither time nor space is able to sever.

1. The novel is told in a kaleidoscopic, time-hopping fashion such that the strands of the four generations of women intertwine seamlessly. How did this structure affect your relationship with Klara, Annelise, Ruth, and Clare, individually and together?

2. Despite living in radically different cultures and time periods, all four women demonstrate a fierce independence regarding their fate in love and motherhood. To what degree is each of their sentiments about a woman's place in society rebellious, and when (if ever) does it become more acceptable? Do they strike a balance of satisfying their own desires with the roles society determines for them?

3. For the majority of the book (save the excerpts from Klara's letters), Fox chose an omniscient narrator whose insights into the characters' minds offer nuanced glimpses into their largely reticent relationships. How close did you feel to the women in the book as you read? What did you learn about these women from what was unsaid, or from between the lines—and what do they learn about each other in the same way?

4. What are some of the defining characteristics that carry among the generations of women? How do the mothers' attitudes about their children reflect their own personalities? Consider Klara's relationship with her granddaughter, Ruthie, compared to with her daughter, Annelise; and Ruthie's relationship with Clare versus Clare's relationship with Klara, vis-à-vis the letters she finds?

5. How are the feelings of satisfaction and pleasure that come from marriage depicted in the novel? What is the balance between staying true to a husband or wife, and indulging in an unrequited love—either nearby or at a distance? Consider the way that Max, Johanna, Charlotte, Oskar, and Matthew maintain a presence in their lovers' lives.

6. What dominant emotions would you say comprise the state of love in the novel? Consider the circumstances in which love is shared and withheld, realized and unrealized, romantic and familial. Is there a difference in the kind of love that takes place between people who are actually together, in time and/or space, and those who are apart? Consider the line describing Annelise and Oskar: "Their attraction is sadness, is an attempt to fill the hole, is cold comfort, is comfort."

7. Annelise's entrée into motherhood is full of obstacles and, in a way, pushes up against her beliefs about her rights to her body. Where does having a child limit her self-expression, and how does it empower and revitalize her?

8. In the first timeframe of the novel, in 1930s–40s Germany, the rise of the Nazis and anti-Semitic behaviors forms a potent but subtle undercurrent. How are these daily realities felt by the characters in their work and home lives? How do their sufferings accumulate over time, and when does a breaking point occur? How large a force did you feel World War II to be in the novel, through its presence and absence?

9. Consider the title of the novel, *Send for Me*. How does its meaning echo across the generations? Who is being sent for, and who is doing the receiving?

10. Compare Annelise's experiences as a young wife and mother in Germany with those in the United States. Does she seem to favor one over the other, and if so, why? Consider her affirmation: "This is her street now. These are the wooden steps that lead up to her front door, the peeling paint on the railing. This is the way the key catches, then turns the lock. Annelise is the key. She is the moment: stuck tight before she loosens, then finally gives."

11. It's expressed that Clare "wondered, much later, if during those stretched out days with her grandparents she might have taken on some of their sadness; if what they gave her, along with their love, was a grain of something that embedded itself inside her, that she protected, in spite of herself, with her body's hot sludge, until it was her own gorgeous, secret sorrow, nacreous and pearly." What does this notion suggest about how and what we inherit from our ancestors? Are the characters in the novel able to control what is passed down?

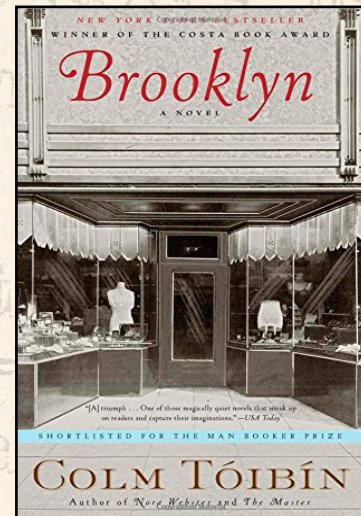
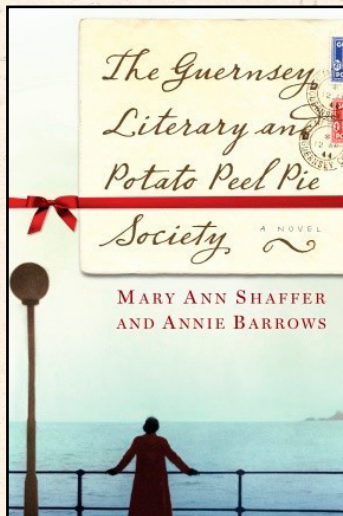
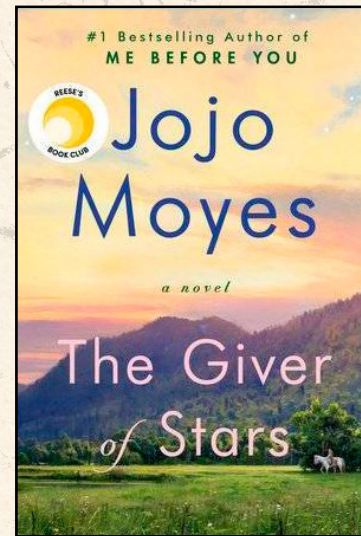
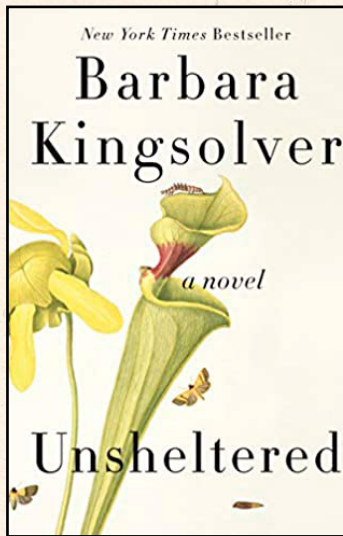
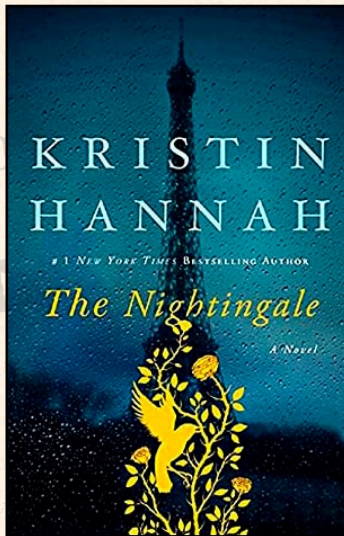
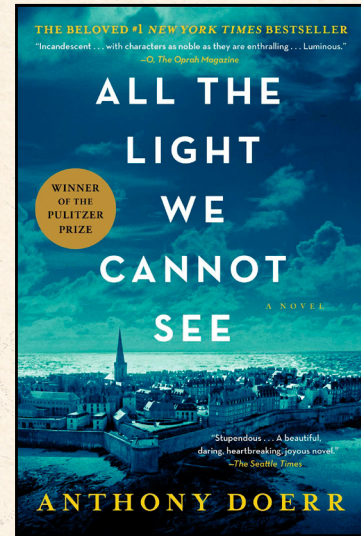
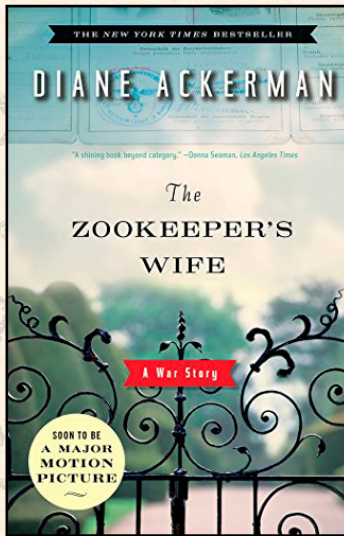
12. How do you think Klara would have responded to living in America, had she made it?

13. Which character did you relate to most while reading? How big a role did the character's age, location, or cultural background affect your ability to empathize with him or her?

14. When they arrive in the United States, Walter and Annelise are considered "refugees." Discuss how the use of this word and categorization for a group of people struck you reading now, post-2020.

15. What do you know of your own family's heritage and, if relevant, transplantation to America? How far along the chain of immigration are you, and what did the novel illuminate about that story and journey?

SUGGESTED FURTHER READING



The Zookeeper's Wife by Diane Ackerman | *Portrait of the Mother as a Young Woman* by Friedrich Christian Delius
All the Light We Cannot See by Anthony Doerr | *The Nightingale* by Kristin Hannah | *Unsheltered* by Barbara Kingsolver
The Giver of Stars by Jojo Moyes | *The Dutch House* by Ann Patchett | *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society* by Mary Ann Shaffer and Annie Barrows | *Brooklyn* by Colm Tóibín



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—Lauren Fox

Meine Lieben!

Sehen haben wir Eueren l. Brief erhalten aus dem wir Euer gutes Wohl
so von uns g. d. auch berichten kann. Wir ja aus der Landgerichts-
bin ich g. s. d. wieder gut gelandet. Am 26. Sept. bin ich nach Hause gekom-
melt nur nach l. Haus und wir von hier aus haben uns gehen die erkrankte
gehen zu. Dieser l. Chatter Vorplatz: gemacht um ihn herauszukommen, was
hinter noch nicht gescheit ist. Aber hoffentlich, steht der Zeitpunkt der Entlassung
us weit entfernt.

von nun die Sache mit der Freigeblichkeit ist, so will Euch mittheilen, daß L. Louis verga-
wisse die Papiere für uns alle gebracht zu h. auch für L. Josephmutter, jedoch ist es
mir bereits gestern ein Brief von H. Lapaz zuge-
kommen, welcher mir mittheilt, daß L. Louis schon dafür kann, sondern ich muß eher das Gegentheil
behaupten, daß er es jetzt gebracht die Freigeblichkeit so schnell heraus zu schicken
deshalb nicht will von Euch, wenn Hr. es ermöglichen könnte, daß noch eine Fr.
L. Josephmutter käme; selbst allerdings die Papiere bei Euch noch nicht so weit
sein, dann würde ich Euch den Vorschlag, da man für ältere Leute schlechter die
kennt, daß Hr. Louis soll auf mich drücken. Ich nehme jedoch an, daß die
Lapaz schon so weit fort sind & mittelst ^{der} es daher Euch wie Hr. glaubt, daß es
ist wäre. Hr. allein möchte noch etwas fragen, daß das was seine L. Mutter
nicht mehr gemüthlich nur die Freigeblichkeit im Fortum ist, sondern wie ich Euch vor
schickte habe es sehr am Platze ist wenn auch Hr. in Eben es ermöglichen könnte.
F. zu sehen. Kommen den Samstag bevor Sonntag habe nach Lüttich & werde die bereit
hende abfahren u. mir gleichzeitig den Friesen gehen lassen, ob dieselbe in Ordnung
Lüttich ist augenblicklich sehr viel Gedräng & die Leute, welche sie mit der Post hin
bekommen gar keine Antwort. Sollte dann Eure F. einbreiten, dann werde ich
entsprechend in H. gleich vorbringen, daß alles in Ordnung gehen wird.

- Turlingwood Prairie

Longwood Farm, 25. 3. 39

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A RECIPE FOR JOAN NATHAN'S ZWETSCHGENKUCHEN

Much of *Send For Me* is set in the Adler family bakery in Feldenheim, Germany. Here, we're pleased to share a German tart recipe from the one-and-only Joan Nathan. As Lauren said, "This zwetschgenkuchen looks exactly like my grandma's—we called it pflaumenkuchen. Just looking at the picture, I can practically taste it."

"This torte is served traditionally at the high holidays in early fall, when small blue Italian plums are in season. In southern Germany and Alsace the pie was made from zwetsche, a local variety of these plums. My aunt Lisl always used to make a mürbeteig crust (a short-crust butter cookie dough) for this tart, and sliced each Italian plum into four crescent shapes. She lined the tart with breadcrumbs and then apricot preserves, which protected the dough during baking, leading to a crispy crust. She went light on the cinnamon, a spice she felt was overused in this country. (I agree with her.) My aunt's results, simple to prepare, were simply delicious." —Joan Nathan

Yield: Makes 6 to 8 servings

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup unbleached all-purpose flour
- A dash of salt
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup (1 stick) unsalted butter or parve margarine
- 1 large egg yolk
- 2 teaspoons dried breadcrumbs
- 1/3 cup apricot preserves
- 1 tablespoon brandy
- 2 pounds Italian plums
- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
- Confectioners' sugar

PREPARATION

1. To make the crust using a food processor, fitted with a metal blade, pulse the flour, salt, and 1 tablespoon of the sugar together. Cut the butter or margarine into small pieces, add to the bowl, and process until crumbly. Add the egg yolk and process until a ball is formed, adding more flour if necessary.
2. To make the dough by hand, use your fingers or a pastry blender to work the butter or margarine into the flour, salt, and 1 tablespoon sugar until the mixture resembles coarse breadcrumbs. Add the egg yolk and work the dough into a ball.
3. Remove the dough from the bowl, dust with flour, and pat into a flattened circle. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least a half hour. When you are ready to make the crust, dust your hands and the dough with flour. Place the dough in the center of a 9-inch pie plate and with your fingers gently pat in out to cover the bottom and go up the sides.
4. Preheat the oven to 400°F.



5. Prick the crust with the tines of a fork in several places and prebake the crust on the middle rack for 10 minutes. Remove the crust from the oven and let it cool slightly. Turn the oven down to 350°F.

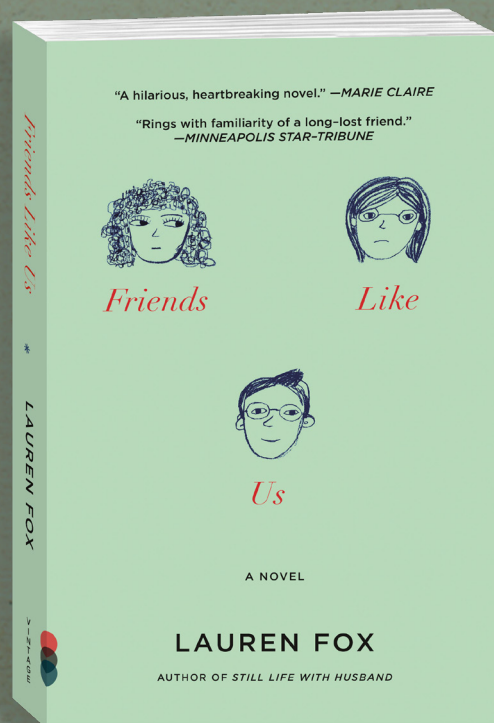
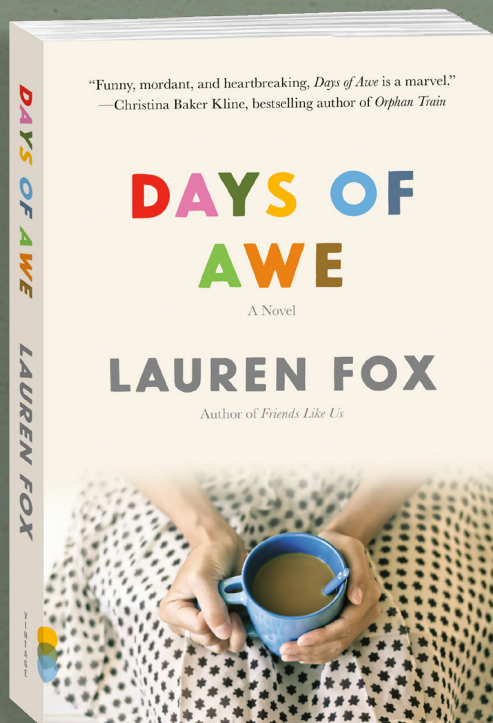
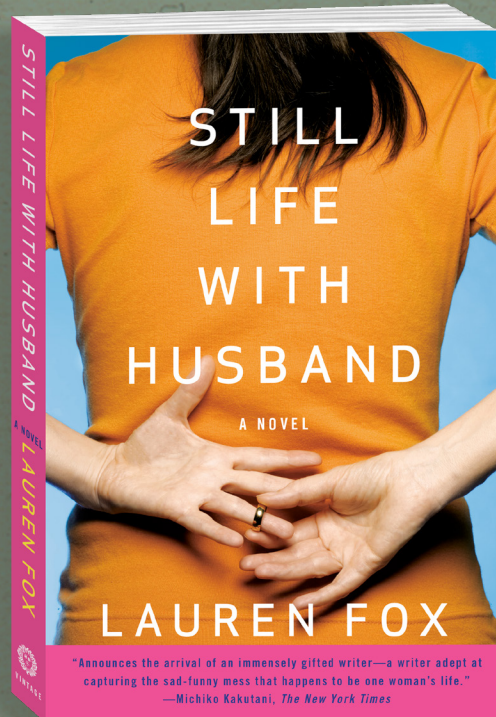
6. Pit and cut the plums into fourths. Sprinkle the breadcrumbs on the dough, then spoon the apricot preserves on top and drizzle with the brandy. Place the plum quarters on the crust in a circle so that each overlaps the next and they eventually form a spiral into the center. Sprinkle with cinnamon and the remaining sugar. (At this point, if you wish, you can wrap and freeze the tart, to bake it later. Just remove the pie from the freezer one hour before baking.)

7. Place the tart in the oven and bake about 30 to 40 minutes or until the crust is golden brown and the plums are juicy. Remove from the oven. Just before serving, sprinkle with confectioners' sugar.



LOOKING FOR YOUR NEXT GREAT READ? CHECK OUT THESE NOVELS ALSO BY LAUREN FOX.

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