

STUDY GUIDE

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JO JOE BY SALLY WIENER GROTTA

This study guide is provided free of any charge to book clubs, teachers and others wishing to conduct a group discussion about *Jo Joe*, a Black Bear, Pennsylvania novel by Sally Wiener Grotta.

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS

The following are the author's suggested questions to discuss.

- ◆ Is there a difference between prejudice and bigotry?
- ◆ Do you know anyone of mixed race and/or religion? How do you think their lives are different from yours?
- ◆ Do you think Joe made the right choice when they were children? Why?
- ◆ If Joe and Judith had married, would it have lasted? Why? What do you think their life together would have been like?
- ◆ Why didn't Joe become like his father and brother? Is bigotry and hatred inherited?
- ◆ Would the story have been different if they had gone to high school today rather than 20 years ago? In what way?
- ◆ Does being Black affect Judith's Judaism? Does being Jewish affect her identity as a Black woman? How?
- ◆ How would Judith's life have been different if she had been raised a Christian?
- ◆ What do you honestly think of the grandmother? In what ways was she right and/or wrong?

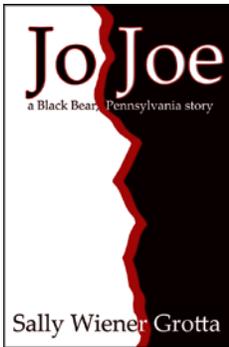
If your group develops other questions that prove to lead to energized, interesting discussions, please share them with us, and we may add them to future iterations of this study guide.

CONNECTING WITH THE AUTHOR

Sally Wiener Grotta gives lectures and conducts workshops based on the themes of *Jo Joe* and her other works. To find out more about her programs, and view related videos, please go to SallyWienerGrotta.com

Sally is also available to chat with book clubs, classes and other discussion groups about *Jo Joe*, often via Skype or Zoom (minimum of 8 people). Depending on her schedule, a personal appearance may be possible.

ABOUT *JO JOE* BY SALLY WIENER GROTTA



As a child, Judith Ormand was the only Jew — and the only Black — in a small insular Pennsylvania mountain village where she was raised by her white Christian grandparents. As a young woman, she must reluctantly break her vow to never return to the town she learned to hate. During her one week visit, she buries and mourns her beloved grandmother, is forced to deal with the white boy who cruelly broke her heart, and is menaced by an old enemy. But with her traumatic discovery of a long buried secret, Judith finds more questions than answers about the prejudice that scarred her childhood.

A Jewish Book Council Network book and a *Midwest Book Review* Reviewer's Choice, *Jo Joe* has been gaining popularity as the starting point for open discussions about bias and prejudice, family misunderstandings, forgiveness and diversity. For some examples of programs for companies, schools, and other organizations that Sally offers on these topics, please go to CrossingTheTribalDivide.com.

Discounts on volume purchases of *Jo Joe* (or other Pixel Hall Press books) are available for book discussion groups and classes.

ABOUT BLACK BEAR, PENNSYLVANIA

Jo Joe is set in the fictional Pocono Mountains village of Black Bear, Pennsylvania. Black Bear was created as a literary *folie à deux* by Sally Wiener Grotta and her husband Daniel Grotta. Both Sally and Daniel have dipped into the same pool of invented locale and characters to write a series of separate stories and novels to paint a full picture of the diversity of life and relationships in a small mountain village. The first Black Bear story was *Honor*, a novella by Daniel Grotta. Sally is continuing to create other Black Bear stories, and Daniel left two other novel manuscripts set in Black Bear. Each Black Bear story stands apart from the others, as separate and complete.

ABOUT SALLY WIENER GROTTA

Whether she is writing books, taking photographs or leading a workshop, Sally Wiener Grotta (www.SallyWienerGrotta.com) is the consummate storyteller. Her words and pictures reflect her deep humanism and appreciation for the poignancy of life.



A full-time award-winning freelance writer, Sally has traveled on assignment throughout the world, covering a wide diversity of cultures and traditions. Her hundreds of stories, columns, essays and reviews have appeared in scores of magazines, newspapers and journals, such as *American Heritage*, *Popular Science*, *North Atlantic Review*, *Islands*, *PC Magazine*, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, *Woman's Day*, *Parade* and many others. Among her numerous books are the novels *The Winter Boy* (a 2015 Locus Award nominee) and *Jo Joe* (selected as a Jewish Book Council Network book).

Sally's far-ranging experiences flavor her stories and presentations with a sense of wonder and otherliness, plus a healthy dose of common sense. A popular speaker, Sally has appeared in venues large and small throughout North America, plus on radio and TV. With her wide-ranging knowledge, and her lively, personable style, Sally inspires her audiences to tap into their own creativity, to ask themselves questions they might not have considered previously, and to seek new solutions together. She also has a reputation for stimulating open, meaningful discussions about creativity, storytelling, the business of writing, and the nature of bias and prejudice.

ABOUT PIXEL HALL PRESS

Pixel Hall Press (www.PixelHallPress.com) is a relatively new, old-fashioned small publishing house whose focus is on discovering literary gems and great stories that might have otherwise been overlooked. Our mission is to publish books that energize the imagination and intrigue the mind, and to be a conduit between readers and provocative, stimulating, talented authors.

In this era of digital technology, Wall Street involvement and merger mania, mainstream publishers seem to have lost sight of the core principles and purpose of publishing. At the other end of the spectrum is an avalanche of self-published books that are notoriously uneven in quality. Small boutique imprints, such as Pixel Hall Press, are reclaiming the heart and soul of publishing by reviving the idea that a publisher's *raison d'être* is to find and nurture great writers, and to provide readers with beautiful, meaningful, truly enjoyable books.

If you have any questions or requests, or wish to connect with our authors, please contact Cynthia Dadson (Cynthia@PixelhallPress.com).