

The Whitakers of Sullivan's Island

A Book Club Guide · By Quinlan Motley



Inspired by Southern Christian values, the book follows a prominent Sullivan's Island family whose unexpected discovery before Thanksgiving leads to a heartwarming, happy ending on Christmas Day.

Start with the complimentary opening selection. The complete written novel is available on Amazon.

Begin with the opening selection.

1. Eli arrives with a photograph and a returned letter. What do these objects establish, and what can they not tell the people in the room?
2. Graham invites Eli to Thanksgiving before speaking with Caroline. How can a generous intention still overlook another person's responsibilities?
3. What do Caroline's preparations for dinner reveal that a direct explanation of her feelings might miss?
4. Which small gesture in the opening selection makes Eli feel more welcome? Which gesture keeps him at a distance?
5. How does the holiday setting change what the family expects of itself?
6. What questions would you want to carry from the opening selection into the complete novel?

Read the opening selection: [PDF](#) · [EPUB](#)

Choose the complete book: [Kindle eBook](#) · [Paperback](#) · [Hardcover](#)

Prices, availability and delivery are shown on Amazon. The opening selection is not the complete novel.

After the complete novel.

These questions consider the whole story. Begin this part when everyone has finished.

1. How does the meaning of belonging change between Thanksgiving and Christmas? Choose a scene that marks a turning point.
2. Where do the family's public manners and private feelings come apart? What helps them become more honest?
3. Compare an apology with a later action. What makes an attempt at repair convincing, and what remains unfinished?
4. Eli has a life and responsibilities in Korea as well as new relationships in South Carolina. How does the novel keep both parts of his life in view?
5. How do music, meals, letters and photographs carry meaning across generations? Choose one recurring object or activity.
6. How does the ending hold happiness alongside grief and uncertainty? What does the family understand differently by Christmas Day?

A 45 minute conversation.

5 minutes: Each reader names one moment or image that stayed with them. Passing is welcome.

15 minutes: Discuss the relationships and the difference between hospitality and belonging.

15 minutes: Compare scenes of apology, responsibility and changed behavior. Stay with the text before making personal connections.

10 minutes: Return to the ending and choose one question you would ask the author.

Make room for different readings. Readers may pass on personal questions. No one needs to disclose their own family history.

Continue the conversation

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