

Book Club Discussion Guide for *Tybee Rhapsody* by Leara Rhodes www.leararhodes.com

Gertrude Kelly, a daughter of Irish immigrants in Savannah, Georgia, yearns to break free from the constraints of her time and become a concert pianist and composer. Facing societal pressures and personal turmoil in the early 1900s, her journey takes her from the lush landscapes of Dublin to the serene shores of Tybee Island, where her dreams seem both tantalizingly close and heartbreakingly out of reach.

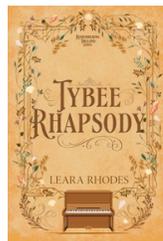
Amidst a backdrop of stunning natural beauty of Tybee, Gertrude becomes the caretaker of a children's summer camp during the winter months. Here, she learns to survive in solitude, foraging for food and navigating her emotions. As she finds herself entwined with a colorful cast of characters—a sea captain, a blind piano tuner, a young boy, and a Gullah woman—Gertrude begins to uncover hidden strength and inspiration, sneaking in piano practices during Sunday afternoons.

But her quest is not without its challenges. Loneliness and regret shadow her every step as she grapples with the consequences of her past choices. Can Gertrude rise above society's biases against women musicians? Will she discover a way to mend the relationships she has strained and embrace her true self? As her Irish roots beckon, Gertrude must confront her deepest fears and desires to forge a new path towards realizing her dreams.

"*Tybee Rhapsody*" is a poignant tale of resilience, self-discovery, and the power of music to heal and unite. Join Gertrude on her journey of transformation as she seeks not only to fulfill her dreams but also to find her place in a world that has not always welcomed her.

Irish heritage for readers of *Tybee Rhapsody* can be discussed through the following questions:

1. Why does Gertrude seek direction? How does her background give her clues? What are ways you may seek direction when the goals you seek seem unattainable?
2. How is "tea" used in the book as communication. What is the importance of tea within the Irish culture? Do we have a "tea culture" today?
3. Why did Gertrude's mother sing "Slieve Gallion Braes" at the end of the story? How do we remember heritage?
4. What did Gertrude think about Thoreau's quote: "Castles in the air..." Is there a part of Thoreau's quote that speaks to you?
5. How were loneliness and solitude described in the story and did Gertrude accept one or the other?
6. There are secondary characters in the story who have specific roles to play in Gertrude's life. How did these characters contribute to Gertrude's story?
7. Saint Brigid of Kildare, one of only three patron saints of Ireland, is discussed at the end of the story. What made the name "Brigid" important to Gertrude?
8. What role did the environment of Tybee Island play in Gertrude's survival?
9. Gertrude could sew. How did her creative process influence her sewing.
10. Music was the glue that brought a diverse community together on Tybee, how did it create this community? How is music used today to bring people together?



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