

A READING GROUP GUIDE

THE PUB ACROSS THE POND

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ABOUT THIS GUIDE

The suggested questions are included to enhance
your group's reading of Mary Carter's
The Pub Across the Pond.

Discussion Questions

1. In the beginning of the novel, a crowd is gathered at Uncle Jimmy's pub. They are waiting on a bride. What is the general mood of the crowd, and how do the various characters feel about love? How does the atmosphere change with the arrival of the German student? How do they react to the proclamation that he is thinking about killing himself?
2. Ronan McBride is a gambler. Carlene Rivers, according to her best friend, Becca, is "the unluckiest girl in the world." Who is actually luckier—Ronan or Carlene? What chances do each of them take in the novel, and which one of them makes the biggest gamble?
3. "Luck is like the weather. It can change like that," an Irishman tells Carlene in the beginning of the novel. How does Carlene's luck change throughout the novel? Is she lucky or unlucky? How does she behave when she considers herself lucky as opposed to when she considers herself unlucky?

4. How does Ronan feel about Carlene when he first spies her standing in the middle of the fountain in Eyre Square? Is it different from how he expected to feel about her? Why does his reaction to her bother him? Would Ronan have fallen in love with “Unlucky Carlene,” who never would have ventured into the fountain in the first place?
5. Does anything in Carlene’s past prepare her to run a pub? What does she get from the Irish culture that she’d been lacking her whole life? What role does touch play in Carlene’s past; how is it different when she comes to Ireland?
6. What does Carlene see as some of the cultural differences between the Irish and Americans? If the Irish festival in Dublin, Ohio, were to take place in Ireland, what would be the difference?
7. How did growing up around mostly women affect Ronan? How did growing up among mostly men affect Carlene?
8. The Irish are known as the friendliest people in the world. Is every Irish person Carlene meets friendly? If not, who isn’t? How do the people of Ballybeog react to Carlene? Who likes her? Who doesn’t? Can she trust all of them?
9. How does Carlene react to the mysterious pranks being played on her, and Joe’s never-ending quest to take over the property?
10. Why does Carlene continue to wear the blue rubber gloves even though her father isn’t around? And when she was with her father, was she enabling him by agreeing to all of his rituals or was she just being a good daughter? Would she have been able to get him to stop? Would he have let her stop?
11. Why doesn’t Carlene name the cat or the pub right away? What does this say about her?

12. How does Ronan treat Carlene? Is it different from how he treats the other women in his life? Is he consistent or erratic with her? How does Carlene's past relationship with an Irish man affect how she interacts with Ronan?
13. What kind of relationship does Carlene have with her regulars? Would her experience have been different if there were no regulars, just new customers coming in every day?
14. Sally tells Carlene that Irish women don't like her. How does Carlene react, and what does she think of Irish women? Is Sally telling the truth? Does Carlene's relationship to Irish women change by the end of the book?
15. Carlene tells Sally, "Become the man you want to marry." How does Sally decide to implement this? Is Sally a changed woman by the end of the book?
16. What role does music play in Irish culture? Is it any different from American culture?
17. What role does the pub play in Irish culture? Is it any different from bars in America?
18. How is the second lottery of the pub different from the first? What does the outcome say about Carlene's presence in Ballybeog? In which circumstance do you think Carlene was luckier?
19. Carlene was deeply affected by her mother's death and carried residual guilt. Her father was deeply affected as well. If Ronan hadn't pushed her, would Carlene have ever shared her "confession" with her father? Would their lives have been different if the two had broached the subject early on? Does Carlene change when her father finally reveals the truth about her mother's passing? Does her father?
20. Do you think Carlene and Ronan will live happily ever after? Will they actually get married? Will they continue to run the pub? Why or why not?