



NANCY: *The Blue Diary* surprised me with gentle composition, slowly unfolding. The author etches artful portraits of the inner life of her main characters from their point of view. I tend to write this way as well, and so I especially admire her excellent crafting. I kept thinking, “I’d like to write like this!” I knew the premise of the story, but that didn’t mean I knew the book. I found the characters intriguing and the story very engaging. I really liked this book.



KATHARINE: As a professor of religion, this book holds a deep question within: Can people change? Should they be forgiven? If they commit a heinous act, does that mean they have no redeeming value as a human? I think we know the Christian answer. But do we really live that?



PRISCILLA: An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. Criminals deserved to be locked up. Forgiven, yes, but still punished. Society must punish this type of behavior to keep it from happening again.



JANE: This book made me think. I’m all for being tough on crime. And I understand his family shunning him. But to see how Ethan turned his life around and did so many good things, saving others? I think second chances are important.



MOLLY: This book for me gets to the heart of the re-entry debate. African-Americans are locked up every day for a lot less than what Ethan did. And—they aren’t welcomed back into the community. Ethan’s supporters astounded me. Maybe this is what happens for white people, rarely for my people, even when they are innocent.



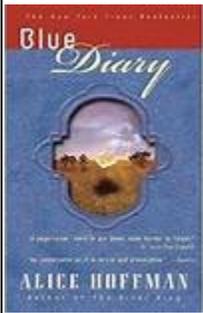
ABIGAIL: Yes, but — look at how good Ethan was. Most murderers only murder once. Look at how much good he contributed to his community. Is it better to lock people up or let them make amends? I think people deserve a second chance.



SALLIE: I cry for the children. Look what happened to a happy boy when his father is accused of a crime. Collie will never be the same. Think about it. The sins of the father, spilling out on his son. This is so hard on young people. I remember when I used to teach. If a parent went to jail, that little person’s whole demeanor shifted. It’s very sad.



Discussion Guide



About the Book

Title: Blue Diary

Author: Alice Hoffman

Published: Berkley, 2002

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Questions for Discussion

1. What were your general impressions of this book?
2. Do you think many people “get away with murder”? Why or why not? Was Ethan living a life you would expect from someone in this situation?
3. Which of the characters did you most identify with in this book and why?
4. The author often describes the natural world through the eyes of her characters. How did this add or detract from the story for you?
5. When upright Christians are accused of doing crimes, what happens in your community/nation? Are they held accountable or defended because of their position in the community?
6. If a person repents and apologizes for their crime, should that change the outcome for their future? Why or why not?
7. Can people change? Does our society allow them to change? Why or why not?
8. What do you believe was the author’s purpose in writing this book and did she accomplish it?
9. Read over the MAMs comments on the book. Which of them do you most agree with and why?
9. In what ways, if any, will this book change your life or perspective?

On YouTube: Meet Alice Hoffman (1:44),

Alice Hoffman on Writing (1:08)