

Wendy Lynn Newton

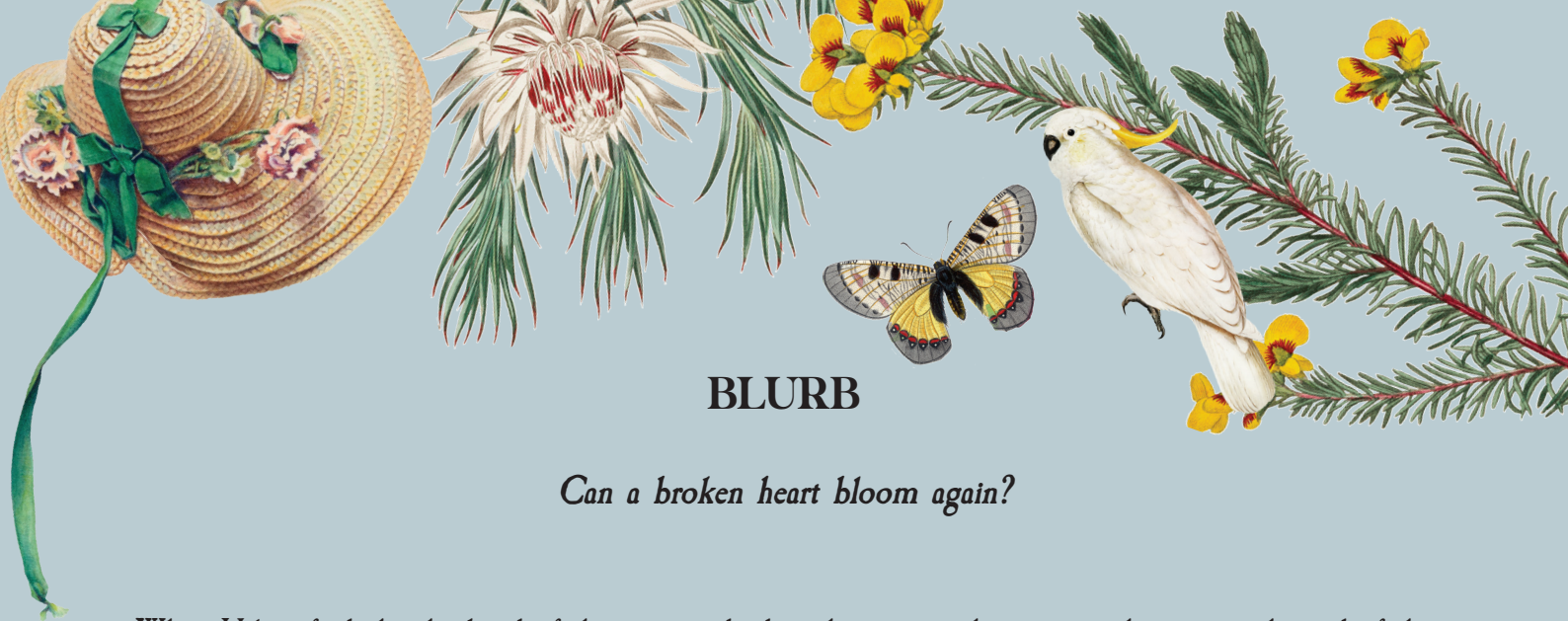


The Secret Garden Club



Reading Group Notes





BLURB

Can a broken heart bloom again?

When Hilary finds her husband of thirty years dead on his way to the compost heap, it is the end of the world as she knows it. In a fit of grief, she destroys every inch of the beautiful garden to which George devoted his life. Only the trees are left standing – because Hilary can't get the safety off the chainsaw.

In the hazy days after the funeral, a group of strangers knock at the door. Announcing themselves as The Secret Garden Club, they tell Hilary that George was a member and one of their dearest friends. So why has Hilary never heard of them? Could they be connected to the mysterious mourner, who had George's favourite pale blue orchid pinned to her chest?

While the club vows to restore the garden, Hilary makes a promise of her own: to uncover the truth. Will George's secret break her heart all over again – or show her the seeds of a new life filled with hope and friendship?

As moving as it is hilarious, *The Secret Garden Club* is an unforgettable story of the green shoots that grow out of grief, perfect for fans of Sophie Green, Joanna Nell and Tricia Stringer.

AUTHOR BIO

Wendy Lynn Newton is an Australian author of two non-fiction books, and her short fiction, feature articles and arts reviews have been widely published in journals, magazines and literary anthologies.

Home is in Lutruwita/Tasmania where she studied Creative Writing at the University of Tasmania and lives with two out-of-control chihuahuas and an indifferent cat. When she isn't writing, you will find her in the garden or on Instagram @wendylynnnewton posting photos of roses, hollyhocks and daphne.





QUESTIONS

1. How do the seasons structure the book and mimic the growth of the characters?
2. In what ways does the garden serve as a metaphor for the characters' life and emotional state? How does its transformation mirror their own healing process?
3. What is the significance of the colour red in the book?
4. How is the theme of miscommunication used throughout the novel?
5. Secrets and omissions are an underlying force in the plot. How do these secrets influence the relationships between the characters, and what impact do hidden truths have on the progression of the story? Discuss how the revelation of these secrets affects the characters' development and the story's resolution.
6. How does the novel explore the themes of grief and recovery? How are these themes symbolised by the garden?
7. How does the author balance the use of humour and colour in a novel that is ostensibly about grief?
8. What did you think was the answer to George's question – *Love is a lot like a garden?*
9. How do the different religious beliefs play out in this novel (Buddhism, Christianity, etc)
10. How does the contrast of Tasmin's homemade cake v Bernie's store bought reflect other aspects of the story?
11. Discuss the role of community and relationships in the novel.
12. The writing in George's Journal is very philosophical and reflective, how do these journal excerpts frame the story? Is there a particular quote from these sections that resonated with you?
13. What impact does the physical act of gardening have on Hilary as she moves through her grief?
14. Where can you find references to and quotes from the book, *The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett?

