

The Reading Guide

Reading Group Questions

1. 'I met ... November 1954' What do you think of this as the opening for the novel? What does it tell us we might expect from the rest of the book and Penelope herself? Is it true to the narrative style throughout the rest of the book?
2. How different do you think LAKS would be if it were set in the Noughties rather than the Fifties?
3. What do you think of the role of fate and chance in LAKS - were Penelope and Charlotte destined to meet? How about Penelope and Rocky?
4. What do you think about the contrast between Britain and America in the novel. How pronounced is this? Is Rocky really that exotic? Is Elvis really that different from Johnny Ray?
5. How important is music in LAKS? What does it tell us about the characters and indeed the narrative itself? How does the author use it to illustrate her story?
6. LAKS describes a world that was vanishing as well as a new world that was emerging at the same time. What are these two colliding cultures and how are they represented by the characters and their stories? How important is class throughout the novel? Does it matter to the characters? Does it matter to you to understand the story?
7. What did LAKS remind of you most specifically, any books? Any films? Did you find it relevant to today?

Other suggested reading

I Capture the Castle – Dodie Smith
Love in a Cold Climate and The Pursuit of Love – Nancy Mitford
Mariana – Monica Dickens
Mrs Miniver – Jan Struther
The Making of a Marchioness – Frances Hodgson Burnett
Dusty Answer – Rosamund Lehmann

The Reading Guide

Reviews

'So good we can hardly speak' **Observer**

'A delight of Nancy Mitford-esque trials and tribulations' **Vogue**

'Enchantingly written and the perfect read for fans of all things vintage' **Prima**

'If you like your green tea loose and your thank-you notes from Smythson, you'll love this modern vintage classic. *****' **Heat**

'Funny, classy and romantic' **Sainsbury's Magazine**

'This book was really funny with likeable characters. Halfway through I thought I knew how it would end, but there were several surprises in store' **Company**

'A comforting read, with echoes of Dodie Smith's *I Capture the Castle* and Nancy Mitford's *Love in a Cold Climate*' **Red**

'A quite delightful tongue-in-cheek period piece' **Woman & Home**

About the Book

Set in the 1950s, in an England still recovering from the Second World War, *THE LOST ART OF KEEPING SECRETS* is the enchanting story of Penelope Wallace and her eccentric family at the start of the rock'n'roll era.

Penelope longs to be grown-up and to fall in love; but various rather inconvenient things keep getting in her way. Like her mother, a stunning but petulant beauty widowed at a tragically early age, her younger brother Inigo, currently incapable of concentrating on anything that isn't Elvis Presley, a vast but crumbling ancestral home, a severe shortage of cash, and her best friend Charlotte's sardonic cousin Harry...

About the author

Eva Rice is the author of two previous novels, *Standing Room Only* and *Butterfly Sting*, and one non-fiction title, *Who's Who in Enid Blyton*. She lives in London with her boyfriend Pete, their baby daughter Martha, Swift the dog and some canaries.