

BOOK CLUB QUESTIONS: *The Secret Sense of Wildflower*



- As the novel opens, Louisa May “Wildflower” McAllister says, “There are two things I’m afraid of. One is dying young. The other is Johnny Monroe.” What role does fear play in the story? Where did these fears originate?
- Loss and grieving are key elements in this story. What role does loss play in the novel?
- In Wildflower’s ritual to get across the footbridge, she calls on a rabbit’s food, her dead father and a gold medallion. What is the significance of the medallion in the book? What does the footbridge symbolize?
- Wildflower constantly questions God, and especially Preacher and the self-righteous in the congregation. What role does God play in her coming-of-age?
- How does Ruby Monroe and what happens to her impact Wildflower’s life?
- After Wildflower is attacked, why does she go back to her given name and refuse to be called “Wildflower” anymore?
- Wildflower says: “Like a friend who goes away because you never listen to them, my secret sense seems to have left me, too.” (p.154) Why did the “secret sense” go away? What is the significance of when it comes back? Are there any other words that you would use for the “secret sense”?
- What role do secrets play in the story?
- How does Wildflower’s friendship with her friend, Mary Jane, evolve throughout the book?
- What purpose does Aunt Sadie serve in Wildflower’s life? Daniel and Jo? How do these close family bonds help Wildflower? How do they hurt? Did you have a favorite sister in the story? A least favorite?
- In the final scene, Wildflower and her mother reconcile. What is the meaning of this scene? What is the significance of it taking place in the barn and her daughter being called “Lily”?

- How does the setting—a rural mountain town in 1941 Tennessee—impact Wildflower’s story?
- *The Secret Sense of Wildflower* has been called “a quietly powerful story, at times harrowing, but ultimately a joy to read.” ([Kirkus](#)—starred review) What makes this novel “quietly powerful”?
- In the same review, the reviewer called Wildflower “an adolescent Scout Finch, had Scout’s father died unexpectedly and her life taken a bad turn” comparing *The Secret Sense of Wildflower* with *To Kill a Mockingbird*. How do you think these two books are similar?
- What do you imagine happens in the next chapter of Wildflower’s life?
- One reader wrote: *I’ve found a new heroine and her name is Wildflower!* In what way is Wildflower brave? How can her story help others?
- This novel has been said to “pack an emotional punch.” How might the emotive quality of a story be of benefit to readers?
- Is there anything you wish had happened in the story that didn’t? What does the author do particularly well?
- How is southern (gothic) fiction different from other genres, such as historical fiction and literary fiction?
- Why do you think coming-of-age novels are such a popular sub-genre?
- What does fiction offer to our modern world, as opposed to non-fiction?

For more information on *The Secret Sense of Wildflower* visit www.susangabriel.com.