

the GLOSS

THE SECRET BOOK OF FLORA LEA

PATTI CALLAHAN HENRY

1. Did you enjoy the book? Rate it from 1 - 5.
2. Hazel takes great care of the rare books while employed at Hogan's Bookshop. In passing, the owner, Edwin, has mentioned the enormous value original illustrations can add to a book. What is revealed about Hazel's character in the decision to take the copy of Whisperwood and the River of Stars along with the illustrations? What about when her initial denial of taking them is factored in?
3. When Hazel makes the phone call to Peggy Andrews seeking information about the book, she gets an unexpected answer about the origin of Whisperwood and the River of Stars. What does this broadly say about the creation of storytelling and mythmaking? Can someone ever own a story?
4. Bridie Aberdeen, as a character, is presented as extremely warm and nurturing yet with some eccentricities. The town gossips about her practices and the "mysterious" disappearance of Henry's father. What was your first impression of Bridie? Did that change at any point during the book?
5. Hazel and Flora's mother had several opportunities to take her daughters back to London but ultimately made the decision that they were safer and better served in Binsey with Bridie and Henry. Do you have a positive or negative opinion of their mother? Would you have made a different choice?
6. Only through an honest conversation years after the fact do Hazel and Henry discover their shared guilt over what happened to Flora. Would that silence have lasted as long if Hazel and Henry were older when Flora first disappeared?
7. How did you feel about the reveal of Dorothy Bellamy's past? Did Dorothy's Aunt Imogene have justification in her decision to remove the child the way she did?
8. At the end of the story, Dorothy (Dot) is coming to terms with two versions of herself. What are the broader implications of childhood memory? Why do we so clearly remember some things and not others, regardless of importance? Can you think of your earliest childhood memory?
9. Hazel's character displays many different emotions in the decision making throughout her life—hope, fear, guilt, love. Which one do you think is the dominant driver? Would it be the same if you were in her shoes?
10. The Secret Book of Flora Lea weaves an ode to stories and, ultimately, how we carry them with us throughout our lives. Is storytelling a universal way for humans to connect? How has storytelling affected your life?