

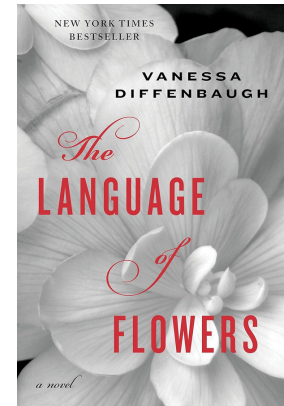
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

8. The novel touches on many themes (love, family, forgiveness, second chances). Which do you think is the most important? And what did you think was ultimately the book's lesson?
9. At the end of the novel, Victoria learns that moss grows without roots. What does this mean, and why is it such a revelation for her?
10. Based on your reading of the novel, what are your impressions of the foster-care system in America? What could be improved?
11. Knowing what you now know about the language of flowers, to whom would you send a bouquet, and what would you want it to say?



WEST BABYLON LITERARY CLUB

THE LANGUAGE OF FLOWERS



**BY VANESSA
DIFFENBAUGH**

NOVEMBER 2023



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SUMMARY

Discovering the symbolic meanings of flowers while languishing in the foster-care system, eighteen-year-old Victoria is hired by a florist when her talent for helping others is discovered, a situation that leads her to confront a painful secret from her past.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

To write *The Language of Flowers*, Vanessa Diffenbaugh found inspiration in her own experience as a foster mother. After studying creative writing and education at Stanford University, Vanessa taught art and writing to youth in low-income communities. She and her husband, PK, have three children and live in Cambridge, Massachusetts. This is her first novel.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What potential do Elizabeth, Renata, and Grant see in Victoria that she has a hard time seeing in herself?
2. While Victoria has often been hungry and malnourished in her life, food ends up meaning more than just nourishment to her. What significance does food take on in the book?
3. Victoria and Elizabeth struggle with the idea of being part of a family. What does it mean to you to be part of a family? What defines family?
4. Why do you think Elizabeth waits so long before trying to patch things up with her long-lost sister Catherine? What is the impetus for her to do so?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

5. The first week after her daughter's birth goes surprisingly well for Victoria. What makes Victoria feel unable to care for her child after that week ends? And what allows her to ultimately rejoin her family?
6. One of the themes of the book is the idea of forgiveness, of second chances—do you think Victoria deserves a second chance after the things she did (both as a child and as an adult)? What about Catherine? And Elizabeth?
7. What did you think of the structure of the book—the alternating chapters in the past and the present? In what ways did the two storylines parallel each other, and how did they diverge?