

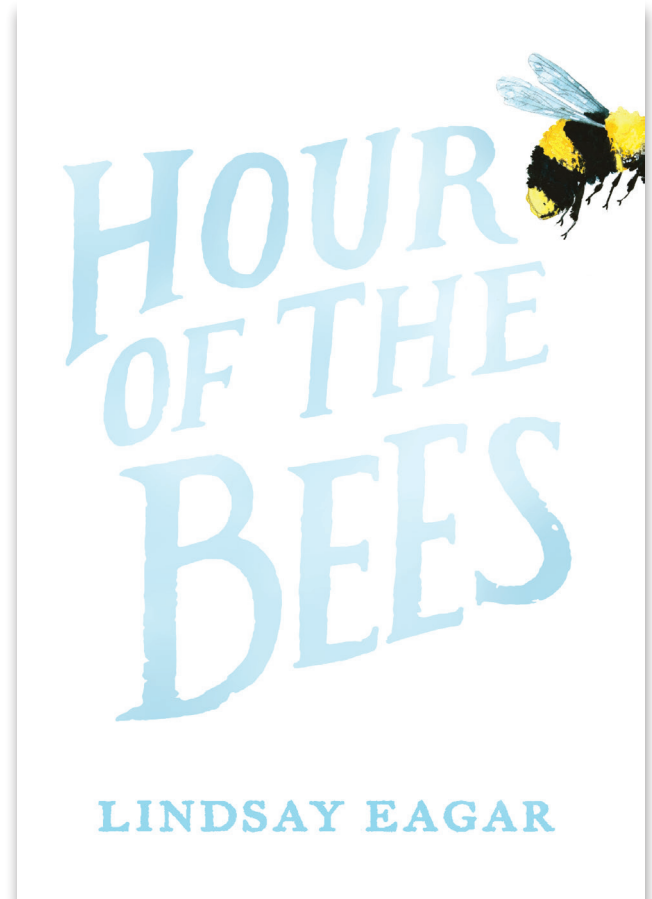
# HOUR OF THE BEES

by Lindsay Eagar

## About the Book

Back home in Albuquerque, she's Carol. But this summer, out in the middle of nowhere with Serge, the senile grandfather she's never even seen before, the twelve-year-old girl finds herself answering to Carolina. "Caro-lee-na," Serge keeps telling her, "don't spit on your roots." As the summer wears on and the heat bears down, Carol is enthralled by her grandfather's crazy stories about an ancient desert oasis, a green-glass lake, and a tree that spreads the gift of immortality. She begins to wonder if the impossible is more possible than she ever imagined.

Magic blends with reality in this stunning coming-of-age novel about a girl, a grandfather, wanderlust, and the pull of roots.



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Also available as an e-book and in audio

## Common Core Connections

This discussion guide, which can be used with large or small groups, will help students meet several of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English Language Arts. These include the reading literature standards for key ideas and details, craft and structure, and integration of knowledge and ideas (**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL**), as well as the speaking and listening standards for comprehension and collaboration and for presentation of knowledge and ideas (**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL**). Questions can also be used as writing prompts for independent work.

## About the Author

"*Hour of the Bees* was unlike anything I'd ever written before," says Lindsay Eagar about her debut novel. "The title came to me one morning, followed by the first line, and the rest poured out of me with quiet, unrelenting force." Lindsay Eagar lives in the mountains of Utah Valley, Utah, with her husband and young daughter. She has a great love for trees.

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## Discussion Questions

1. Carol's family is Mexican American, but "we never act like the Mexican part," she says (page 37). How does that change when her family goes to Serge's ranch? Why does it change?
2. "How am I supposed to know where the dementia ends and Serge begins?" Carol asks herself (page 27). How would you answer her question? Is there a line between Serge's dementia and his true self? Why or why not?
3. Bees appear throughout this novel, but the book's title is *Hour of the Bees*. When do you think that "hour" is? Why?
4. Clocks are just one way to tell time. How do the people in Serge's stories measure the passage of time? How does Serge? How does Carol? How do you?
5. "Twelve," says Serge, "is the border between childhood and old" (page 82). Do you agree or disagree? Why?
6. Carol was born on the very day that her grandmother Rosa died. Why is that significant? In what ways does Carol resemble her grandmother? How is she very different?
7. At several points in the novel, Carol recalls her grandfather's saying: *Things are only impossible if you stop to think about them*. What are the advantages of believing this? What are the risks?
8. Carol loves Serge's stories, but she initially believes they are just figments of his imagination. What does she believe about his stories by the end of the novel? What do you believe about his stories? Why?
9. "It's boring," Rosa says of her village (page 89). "It's too safe here. Nothing new ever happens." Would you want to live in a place without illness or death? Why or why not?
10. Father Alejandro tells his parishioners that the tree in their village is a gift from God, not a temptation from the devil. What do you think? In what ways is it a blessing? How is it also a curse? Why does Father Alejandro venture away from the village? Why is Serge the only villager who stays put?
11. In the biblical account of Adam and Eve, a snake and a tree play prominent roles, just as they do in this novel. Do you see any other connections between these two tales? If so, what are they?
12. Why do you think the bees carried away the water in the lake? Why do you think they return it?
13. After a summer in the desert, Carol sees her life in Albuquerque with new eyes. How have her relationships with her friends changed? What has changed about her relationships with her parents and siblings, especially Alta?
14. The Seville is a high-priced assisted-living facility in a big city. Serge's dilapidated ranch is in a remote desert. What do these two places have in common? Why is Serge determined to stay in one but longing to leave the other?
15. "Do not be afraid to live," Serge tells Carol (page 344), "and you will not be afraid to die." What does he mean? Do you agree? Why or why not? And why do you think Carol switches the order of his words when she recalls them on page 353 (*Do not be afraid to die and you will not be afraid to live*)?
16. Life and death are at the very heart of this novel. Has reading *Hour of the Bees* changed your understanding of each? How?
17. Both Rosa and her son, Raúl, hate living on the ranch, yet they keep coming back to it. Why? What do you imagine the next generation will do with the land? Will Carol be as devoted to it as Serge was? Will Alta? Will Luis?
18. "Stories don't end," Serge tells Carol (page 123). "They just turn into new beginnings." How does this novel prove his point?



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