

# SUMMER HOURS

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Reader's Guide





## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. The title *Summer Hours* has multiple meanings in the novel: In the 1990s thread, it's the name of Cal's boat and refers to the hours Becc and Eric play hooky from their jobs. In the 2008 thread, the title captures the carefree hours of youth. What does the phrase mean to you?
2. In the novel, characters like Becc and Eric are worried they might be "selling out." How does this notion of selling out shape their actions and decisions in positive or negative ways? What does the phrase *selling out* mean to you? Is it just an idealistic term, or do you think there is a way to balance dreams and professional realities in life?
3. Discuss Cal as a character. Did you understand why Becc was drawn to him?
4. Contrast Becc's relationships with Cal and Eric. How was Becc a different person in each relationship? Who did you feel was better for her?

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5. Does Becc face more lingering consequences from the affair than Cal? Why do you think that is? Do you think she should have regretted their relationship more, or did she ultimately gain something from it?
6. Like the book/movie *The Graduate*, *Summer Hours* features a love triangle, but in this case, a woman is at the point. How does the author subvert gender tropes in both the 1990s and 2008 threads?
7. Why do you think Becc feels the need to lie or bend the truth in her letters to Francine Haggermaker? Does Francine give Becc any reason to fear her disapproval? Were you surprised by the revelation that Francine was also secretly subversive—much like the Feline Collective—in her youth?
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8. Discuss the Feline Collective and its mission to expose sexual harassment on campus. Despite the '90s setting, did that element of the story resonate with you as a reader today? What has changed in society's approach to sexual harassment?
9. Discuss the older generation of women in the novel: Becc's mom; Eric's mom (Donna); Francine (scholarship granter); and Yvonne (Serra's art mentor and the force behind the Feline Collective). How did your view of these women evolve over the course of the story? How did these characters affect the younger generation of women in the novel?
10. Journalism, movies, and art play a big role in this novel. How do the changes we see in these fields in the 1990s narrative reflect the characters' own coming-of-age journeys?
11. *Summer Hours* explores the journalism industry both in the '90s, which was the beginning of the internet revolution,
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and in 2008. Compare the journalism context we see through Becc's professional path to the ways people get news today. Do you think the changes have been positive, negative, or both?

12. Were you happy Becc and Eric ended up together, at least for the near future? Or do you think it's best to leave the past in the past?