

# Shoulder Season

## DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. What was your first impression of Sherri at the beginning of *Shoulder Season*? How did this opening set the tone for the rest of the novel?
2. As a young girl Sherri “never had the luxury to misbehave” (chapter 1). How do you think this fact of Sherri’s life influences the decisions she makes as she grows into a young woman?
3. Sherri expresses her reluctance to interview to be a Bunny in chapter 1, and the narrator explains that “... becoming a Bunny would permanently change her reputation in a small town where your reputation was all you had.” How does the truth of this belief manifest, or not, throughout the rest of the novel?
4. In the same vein, Sherri feels the need to leave the small town of East Troy, believing that a better, more interesting life exists elsewhere. What is it that she feels her town lacks, and does she actually need to leave home to find it?
5. What role does Roberta play in Sherri’s life and how does it evolve throughout the course of the novel? What are some of the other significant female friendships in Sherri’s life?
6. Examine the parallels between the two main men that have romantic roles in Sherri’s life: Mitch and Arthur. What expectations did she have for her relationships with both of them? And what did the men ultimately mean to her? What happens when Sherri stops mythologizing both of them in her mind?
7. Time is a prevalent theme in the novel. What are some ways that the importance of time manifests in the novel? What are some other themes you picked up on as you were reading?
8. Examine Raylee’s role in the novel. In what ways does her life parallel Sherri’s? How do you view Sherri’s relationship with her and its evolution over the course of the novel?



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9. How is the life of a Bunny depicted in the novel different from what we assume about Bunnies?

10. Gloria Steinem went undercover as a Bunny and famously wrote, "All women are Bunnies. But it doesn't need to be that way." What did she mean by that? Sherri's friend Jeanne accuses Sherri of setting women back, but Sherri doesn't see other opportunities available to her for advancement and empowerment. Did Sherri set women back by putting on the Bunny costume? In what ways was she empowered or belittled by becoming objectified, by men as well by as other women?

11. Discuss the scene where Jerry saves the turtle on the side of the road. What is the significance of this moment? How does this impact what we believe to know about Jerry's character?

12. In chapter 18, Sherri acknowledges that she is haunted by what Arthur said to her: that she needed to focus on becoming rather than being. How do you think that statement affects Sherri's decisions after Arthur tells her that? What are some other ways that Sherri is haunted by her relationship with Arthur?

13. Examine the following line in chapter 24: "Perhaps she should have given her younger self more credit for her intuition." Have there been moments throughout your life when you didn't trust your intuition? What lessons did you learn from those situations? Were any of them similar to Sherri's experiences?

14. How did the ending of the novel make you feel? What do you think the future holds for Sherri?

