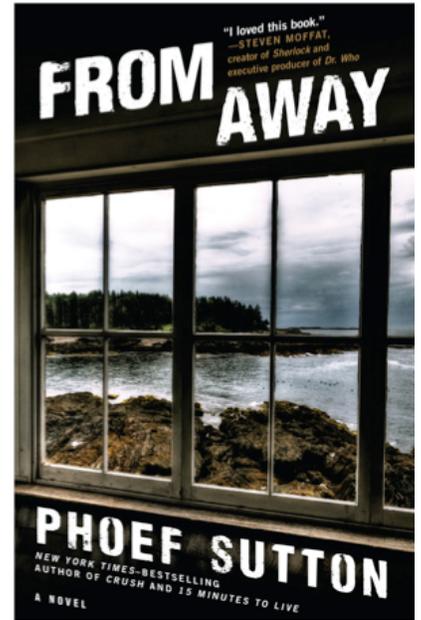


Reading Group Guide
From Away
By Phoebe Sutton



10 Conversation Starters

1. What does the title “From Away” mean to you? What were your initial thoughts about the book solely based on the title?
2. Why do you think the author chose to use second-person narration? What are some of the strengths and weaknesses of this narrative type? How would the story be different if told in first- or third-person perspective?
3. “Christmas is a time for ghost stories.” What do you think of the novel’s opening line? As with the Kehoe family and ghost stories at Christmas time, does your family have any unusual holiday traditions?
4. Sammy tells the story of seeing the ghost of his gym teacher in the seventh grade. Have you ever had any kind of supernatural experience? Do you believe in ghosts to begin with? Has your opinion on ghosts changed as a result of reading this book?
5. *From Away* explores numerous family and community dynamics: the Kehoe siblings and their co-parenting of Maggie, the sense of tradition and camaraderie seen on Fox Island, and the contrasting nature of Brown Head Island families like the Moesby household. How do these different dynamics contribute to the book’s narrative? In what ways are these communities similar or different from ones in your own life?
6. Consider this excerpt from page 49:

“I guess I’ve always thought that there was within me this whole cast of characters, like the supporting players in a good Howard Hawks movie. The Bud Abbott guy. The Fight Guy. The Krispy Kreme Donut Man. The Good Mother, who somehow knew how to change your diapers, bandage your boo-boos, and soothe your tears without ever being taught. These have always seemed more like friends and enemies who visit me than parts of myself.”

Can you relate to any of Sammy’s “cast of characters?” If you had Sammy’s medium abilities, what kinds of ghosts or spirits do you think you’d find if it had been you in Mrs. Day’s barn? Would you want to meet them? What kinds of conversations would you want to have?

7. Discuss Jellica’s character. What were your first impressions of her? How did your opinion of her change after she revealed that she was the one that made Kathleen stop drinking? Or when Sammy learned of her abusive childhood? What was your reaction to Sammy’s observation of the cycles of abuse in Jellica’s family?

8. How do secrets affect the different members of the Kehoe family? Think of Sammy's self-inflicted secrecy surrounding his "abilities," and remember his revelation about his mother's concealed ability to see ghosts. Charlotte has her own secrets, such as the truth about Maggie's father and what really happened during her trip to LA. In what ways do these secrets contribute to these characters' personalities and motivations?
9. Sammy saves Maggie by using his abilities and discovering how to control them. How do you think he uses this knowledge after Maggie wakes up? Do you think he will continue to help ghosts "move on," or do you think he's done with ghosts forever after his experience traveling through the different ghosts' rooms?
10. What are your thoughts about the ending? Are you satisfied, or would you have liked more? What do you imagine would happen next, or a few years down the line? How do you think Maggie will react if she reads Sammy's book? Do you think he ever gave it to her? How will the experiences that Sammy had affect Maggie's understanding of her own abilities?