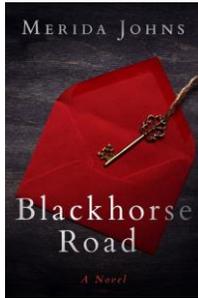
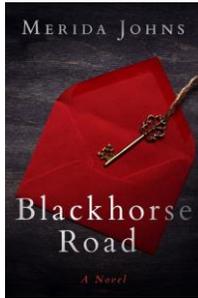


## Book Club Discussion Guide for “Blackhorse Road A Novel”



1. Lucinda says, “What defines a person are not one’s financial or physical attributes or beliefs. Instead, it’s the choices that one makes in surmounting life’s challenges.” Choice is a significant theme in the story.
  - a. How does choice define the main characters—Luci, Barry, and Marie?
  - b. Besides choice, did you see other themes running through the characters’ stories?
2. Luci says, “Conformity may make life seem more comfortable. But blind obedience, in time, frustrates and disappoints us. It is conformity that robs us of our hope and deprives us of improving ourselves and creating a better and fairer world.”
  - a. Do you think that Luci was able to live up to this value?
  - b. If she did resist tradition, how did her actions form the person she finally became?
  - c. How has the author threaded resistance to conformity throughout the story and characters?
3. The author has positioned Sam, Genevieve, and Chris as Luci’s “therapists” or guardian angels. In what way do these characters contribute to Luci’s emotional maturation?
4. Senior Midwest Book Reviewer, Diane Donovan, says that Blackhorse Road brings readers into a world where . . . transgression changes everything and challenges carefully constructed foundations of belief and values. What are the beliefs and values being challenge, and who is challenging them?
5. The story explores cultural, social, and religious values relating to unwed pregnancy and the limited options for unmarried pregnant women in the 1960s. How do you think feelings of shame, abandonment, and humiliation affected Dora and Sheila? What impact do you believe their experiences had on Luci’s maturation and beliefs?
6. Connor, Barry’s father, says that “Time and place shape a person.” The author uses the immigrant journey as a foundation in the novel—Irish immigration to Canada, Irish immigration to Buffalo, Italian immigration to Canada, and Canadian immigration to the United States. What challenges did these immigrants face? In what way, if any, were the challenges the same or different among the different eras of immigration? How did the immigration of their grandparents and great-grandparents shape Luci and Barry?
7. Marie scoffs at the idea of a soulmate. If you were to choose who best fits the definition of Luci’s soulmate, who would that be and why?

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8. The story is a contrast in parenting. How would you describe the parenting of Sam and Marie, Connor and Breana, and Genevieve? How do you believe parenting shaped Luci and Barry? Have you experienced or seen similar contrasts, and what were their effects?
9. How might you answer Luci’s observation in Chapter 16: *What is it between mothers and daughters? What causes toxic behavior and one-upmanship? Is it because the earlier generation had fewer opportunities and less freedom than the next? Or is the clash between what is permissible and not due to mothers trying to protect their daughters from making the same mistakes that they made?*
10. Finding and giving forgiveness is a critical theme of the story. What are your feelings about Luci’s resolution of forgiveness? *I keep asking myself, what is forgiveness? Forgiveness is not pardoning. It is not overlooking or justifying my mother’s transgression or the hurt her actions caused. I am relieved that I don’t have to condone or excuse, reconcile, or forget her behavior to forgive her.*
11. Living in the present is a persistent topic in the story. How do you interpret this observation by Genevieve? *One thing my porch soirees have taught me is that listening and forgoing judgment goes a long way in understanding the core concerns beneath a person’s words.”*
12. Which character(s) rattle in your head at the end of the story, and what makes them haunt you?
13. If you were to write a continuation of the story, how might the lives of Luci and Barry evolve?

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