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Saving CeeCee Honeycutt by Beth Hoffman

Discussion questions used at SPL July 11 & 12, 2017

Questions issued by publisher:

1. CeeCee tries to escape from the harsh reality of her life by turning to books. When did your own love of reading develop? Did a particular person or event inspire it? What were some books you loved as a child?
2. Camille's illness left CeeCee filled with shame and despair. Do you think if she had told Mrs. Odell more of what went on inside the house that the elderly woman could have done something? If so, what? Were there any incidents in your youth that brought you shame or that you were afraid to discuss with an adult?
3. This book highlights comparisons between the North and South. What do you think accounts for the differences—perceived or otherwise—between people who live on either side of the Mason-Dixon Line?
4. As the story unfolds, a remarkable relationship develops between Oletta and CeeCee—Oletta becomes the stable and wise mother CeeCee never had, and CeeCee fills the place in Oletta's heart left vacant by the untimely death of her daughter. Has anyone ever unexpectedly arrived in your life and filled a void? Have you ever filled a void in someone else?
5. After the attack at the beach, Oletta tells CeeCee she must "reclaim her power" to overcome her fears. What are some times in your life when you had to stand up to reclaim your own power? How did you go about it?
6. Forgiveness is an underlying theme in CeeCee's story. By eventually forgiving her parents, she frees herself to begin a new life. What people have you forgiven, and how hard was it to do? What were the rewards? What did CeeCee gain from forgiving her mother & her father?
7. Aunt Tootie and all her friends make an art out of making people feel welcome. How do the various women welcome CeeCee into their ranks? What about their welcome for Mrs. Odell? What are some particular times when you've received a warm welcome? What about the opposite?
8. The incident at the peach farm followed by the days CeeCee spends in recovery mark a poignant turning point in her life. Has there ever been a time when you faced your own turning

point? Was there anyone who helped you? What gifts were waiting for you at the end of your journey?

9. When Aunt Tootie tells CeeCee that she's "a very popular lady," it has a profound effect on her. What are some other times in the book when CeeCee takes an adult's words to heart—good and bad? What are some particularly memorable things that were said to you as a child—positive or negative?

10. At several key moments in the story, CeeCee finds that her Life Book is being revised. Are there any other words or terms for "Life Book" that you've heard? What are some moments in your life when you knew an indelible memory was being made? When was the last time you recall thinking, "I'll remember this forever"?

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General discussion questions

- For the person who chose the book – What made you want to read it? What made you pick it for the book club? Did it live up to your expectations?
- How is the book structured? First person? Third person? Flashbacks? Narrative devices? Do you think the author did a good job with it?
- How would you describe the author’s writing style? Concise? Flowery? How is language used in this book? Read aloud a passage that really struck you. How does that passage relate to the book as a whole?
- How effective is the author’s use of plot twists? Were you able to predict certain things before they happened? Did the author keep you guessing until the end?
- Did the book hold your interest?
- How important is the setting to the story? Did you feel like you were somewhere else? Did the time setting make a difference in the story? Did the author provide enough background information for you to understand the setting and time placement?
- Which is stronger in the book – the characters or the plots?
- Would you recommend this book to someone else? Why? And to whom?

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Title:

Taken from a website: [Litlovers.com](http://www.litlovers.com)

website address: <http://www.litlovers.com/reading-guides/13-reading-guides/fiction/899-saving-ceecee-honeycutt-hoffman?start=1>

Author Bio

- Birth—N/A
- Where—Ohio, USA
- Currently—lives in Newport, Kentucky

Beth Hoffman was president and co-owner of a major interior design studio in Cincinnati, Ohio, before selling her business to write full time. *(From the publisher.)*

More

In her own words:

I was born on an elevator during a snowstorm, a story my father often enjoyed telling whenever the opportunity arose. For the first five years of my life, I lived (along with my mom, dad, and older brother) on my grandparents' farm in northern Ohio. It was a rural area, and other than a few tolerant garden toads, a highly social chicken, and Midnight, our family dog, there wasn't anyone to play with. So I created imaginary friends. I'd draw pictures of them and build them homes out of shoeboxes—replete with interiors furnished by pictures I'd cut from a Sears & Roebuck catalog. Eventually I wrote stories about my friends, giving them interesting names and complex lives.

From earliest memory, there were two things I loved above all else: writing and painting. I wrote my first short story when I was eleven and sold my first painting at the age of fourteen. I believed the sale of the painting was a sign of what direction I should take in life. So I chose a career in art that eventually segued into interior design, but I still kept writing and dreaming of becoming a novelist. Life sent me on many creative journeys and I ultimately landed in Cincinnati, Ohio, becoming the president and co-owner of an interior design studio.

Years went by, long hours and hard work brought success, and with it came the inevitable stresses of business ownership. During the busiest year of my professional life, I nearly died from the same infection that took puppeteer Jim Henson's life—group A streptococcal infection that resulted in septic shock. After finally being discharged from the hospital, I returned home to convalesce. I spent weeks reevaluating my life—the good, the bad, and the downright painful. As

I struggled to regain my health and find spiritual ballast, my dream of writing a novel resurfaced. But no matter how I looked at it, there simply weren't enough hours in the day to fulfill the demands of my career and write a novel. So I let the dream go.

Then, on a snowy morning in January of 2004, a complete stranger said something to me. And like an unexpected gust of fresh air, his words blew the door wide open. In an eye-blink I knew if I were to write a novel, it had to be now or never. I chose now. I sold my portion of the design business, and after a month of sleeping and meditating and realigning my energies, I plunked down at my computer. Day after day my fingers blazed over the keyboard, and I didn't come up for air until I typed "The End" nearly four years later.

If there's a moral to my story, it's this: take a chance, embrace your dreams, forgive, let go, move on. And if life gives you a big smackdown, there's a reason—and it just might lead toward your own little piece of the rainbow.

Oh, and there's one more thing: be mindful of the words of strangers. (*From the [author's website](#).*)