

# DISCUSSION GUIDE

*Summers at the Saint*

by Mary Kay Andrews

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## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

*Reprinted from publisher.*

Mary Kay Andrews is the *New York Times* bestselling author of 30 novels (including *The Homewreckers*; *The Santa Suit*; *The Newcomer*; *Hello, Summer*; *Sunset Beach*; *The High Tide Club*; *The Weekenders*; *Beach Town*; *Save the Date*; *Ladies' Night*; *Christmas Bliss*; *Spring Fever*; *Summer Rental*; *The Fixer Upper*; *Deep Dish*; *Blue Christmas*; *Savannah Breeze*; *Hissy Fit*; *Little Bitty Lies*; and *Savannah Blues*), and one cookbook, *The Beach House Cookbook*.

A native of St. Petersburg, Florida, she earned a B.A. in journalism from The University of Georgia. After a 14-year career working as a reporter at newspapers including *The Savannah Morning News*, *The Marietta Journal*, and *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, where she spent the final ten years of her career, she left journalism in 1991 to write fiction.

Her first novel, *Every Crooked Nanny*, was published in 1992 by HarperCollins. She went on to write ten critically acclaimed mysteries under her real name, Kathy Hogan Trocheck. In 2002, she assumed the pen name Mary Kay Andrews with the publication of *Savannah Blues*. In 2006, *Hissy Fit* became her first *New York Times* bestseller, followed by fifteen more *New York Times*, *USA Today* and *Publisher's Weekly* bestsellers. To date, her novels have been published in German, Italian, Polish, Slovenian, Hungarian, Dutch, Czech and Japanese.

She and her family divide their time between Atlanta and Tybee Island, GA, where they cook up new recipes in three restored beach homes, The Breeze Inn, Ebbtide, and Coquina Cottage—all named after fictional places in Mary Kay's novels, and all available to rent through Tybee Vacation Rentals. In between cooking, spoiling her grandkids, and plotting her next novel, Mary Kay is an intrepid treasure hunter whose favorite pastime is junking and fixing up old houses.

## BOOK SUMMARY

Everyone refers to the St. Cecelia as “the Saint.” If you grew up coming here, you were “a Saint.” If you came from the wrong side of the river, you were “an Ain’t.” Traci Eddings was one of those outsiders whose family wasn’t rich enough or connected enough to vacation here. But she could work here. One fateful summer she did, and married the boss’s son. Now, she’s the widowed owner of the hotel, determined to see it return to its glory days, even as staff shortages and financial troubles threaten to ruin it. Plus, her greedy and unscrupulous brother-in-law wants to make sure she fails. Enlisting a motley crew of recently hired summer help—including the daughter of her estranged best friend—Traci has one summer season to turn it around. But new information about a long-ago drowning at the hotel threatens to come to light, and the tragic death of one of their own brings Traci to the brink of despair.

Traci Eddings has her back against the pink-painted wall of this beloved institution. And it will take all the wits and guts she has to see wrongs put to right, to see guilty parties put in their place, and maybe even to find a new romance along the way. Told with Mary Kay Andrew’s warmth, humor, knack for twists, and eye for delicious detail about human nature, *Summers at the Saint* is a beach read with depth and heart.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The Saint is a family business, and Traci wants Parrish to work the guest relations desk so she can promote the family image. How did Traci's varying relationships with the Eddings family impact her running the hotel and resort? Would you ever go into business with your family?
2. At the beginning of the story, we learn that Traci was born into a working-class family so she was considered an "Ain't." Because she marries into the wealthy Eddings family, she becomes a "Saint." How are class differences presented in the story? Which characters were you more sympathetic towards?
3. *Summers at the Saint* is told from a variety of third person limited perspectives. How did this structure impact your reading experience? Whose perspective was your favorite to read?
4. In Chapter 13, Traci revealed that her mother-in-law started a tradition to watch the sunset on the patio with a glass of wine. Do you have any vacation traditions?
5. Traci was only 40 when she became a widow, and it's been four years since her late husband, Hoke, died. Parrish's death also devastates her. How does Traci cope with both of their losses? How is grief portrayed in the book?
6. *Summers at the Saint* is a summer mystery beach read, but the author nods to several serious topics like sexual assault and harassment, the opioid crisis and white privilege. Why is it important to bring awareness to these issues in a story like this?
7. Shannon raised Olivia as a single mother. Traci tried to have kids with Hoke, going through four rounds of IVF, but ultimately never had children. Traci is closer to Parrish than Parrish's own mother and stepmother, Madelyn, are to her. How are Shannon, Madelyn and Traci's approaches to motherhood different?
8. Shannon and Traci have been friends since they were children. Although they go through a long period of time without speaking to each other, they reconcile by the end of the story. Other female friendships in the story include Traci and Parrish, Olivia and Felice, and Olivia and Parrish. What is the significance of including and preserving female friendships in the story?
9. When you realized who was behind Parrish's death and the shady deals going on in the resort, were you surprised? Which characters were you most suspicious of? Were there clues throughout the story that gave them away?
10. Were you rooting for Whelan and Traci to get together? What was your favorite moment between the pair?

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