DISCUSSION GUIDE AND PROJECT IDEAS FOR
THE SUMMER OF MOONLIGHT SECRETS

About the Book

_A summer tale full of magic and wonder, featuring an unforgettable antebellum hotel._

Welcome to Florida’s Meriwether, a once grand hotel where nothing is quite as it seems. Hidden staircases give way to forgotten rooms; underground tunnels lead to darkness; and the summer moon shines on a secret the hotel’s residents have never discovered.

Allie Jo Jackson knows every nook and cranny of The Meriwether and the springs it sits near. Nothing surprises her—nothing, that is, until the first time she spots Tara emerging from the water of the springs. Tara’s shimmery skin, long flowing hair, and fondness for midnight swims give rise to questions Allie Jo and her friend Chase can’t believe they’re asking. And the answers just might change their lives.

About the Author

Danette Haworth is the author of _The Summer of Moonlight Secrets_ and _Violet Raines Almost Got Struck by Lighting_. Growing up in a military family, Danette lived up and down the East Coast and in Turkey and England; she now calls Orlando, FL, her home. Visit her at [www.danettehaworth.com](http://www.danettehaworth.com).
Discussion Guide for The Summer of Moonlight Secrets

**Chapters 1-12**

- This story is narrated first by Allie Jo, then by Chase, and, finally, by a third narrator. Why do you think the author chose this approach to tell the story? How would the story have been different if told only through the eyes of one of the three narrators?

- Allie Jo’s mother tells her that people say mean things because they’re jealous. Allie Jo says, “I think people say mean things because they’re mean” (p. 24). Who is right? Why are people mean to other people without having been provoked? Has it happened to you and how did you handle it?

- Sometimes young people fall into groups and it seems as though one group wields power over the others. In Allie Jo’s situation, Jennifer Jorgensen is the ring leader of some girls who call Allie Jo names and otherwise ignore her. Allie Jo’s response to these girls is to avoid them (p. 32). How do you think Allie Jo should handle this situation?

- Chase says that if he weren’t thirteen, the strange noises the hotel makes might scare him (p. 54). Sophie is embarrassed when her mother kisses her in front of Allie Jo, saying, “I’m almost a teenager” (p. 51). Allie Jo knows the exact number of days before she turns thirteen (51). What are your feelings about becoming a teenager? What do you think will be different? If you are a teenager, how has reaching this stage of your life changed your perspective on life?

**Chapters 13-30**

- When Chase was little, he and his father used the moon to stay connected when his father was away on business trips. What traditions or special links do you and your family members share to remain close? (p. 95)

- Tara tells Allie Jo and Chase a small bit of truth (103, 120)—that she’s a runaway—before she tells them the complete story. Why do you think she initially trusts them with only one small piece of what’s happened to her?

- Some of the students from Allie Jo’s school think it’s weird that she lives in the old hotel (p. 138). How do you think Allie Jo feels about living there? How would life at The Meriwether be different from life in a regular house in a regular neighborhood?

- Allie Jo and Chase respond differently to being underwater with the manatees and Tara. Allie Jo recounts, “I’d been terrified” (p. 151), while Chase remarks, “That was incredible” (p. 179). Why are their reactions so different?
Chapters 30-66

- Chase and Allie Jo decide to teach Tara to sound more like an American teenager when she speaks. They instruct her on current phrases—when and how to use them. If you had to teach someone to sound like a person from your age group, what words or phrases would be important for them to know (p. 187)?

- Upon hearing Tara’s whole secret, Allie Jo and Chase believe her, but later doubts creep in, at least for Allie Jo. Why do you think Allie Jo believes Mr. Smith, a man she’s just met, over Tara, with whom she’s spent time (p. 225)? Why does Chase stick by Tara (p. 228)?

- Allie Jo, Chase, Sophie, and Tara all have secrets. Some secrets they share, such as Sophie telling Allie Jo she likes Chase, or Chase telling Allie Jo about his mother. Allie Jo shares the secrets of the hotel with Chase and Sophie. But there’s one big secret Chase and Allie Jo agree to keep from Sophie and even their parents—something Tara tells them. Why don’t they share this secret with anyone? How would you have handled it? Is it ever right to tell someone else’s secret?

- Both Chase and Allie Jo have good relationships with their parents. How does Chase’s relationship with his father differ from Allie Jo’s relationship with her parents?

- Several legends are mentioned in this book. What legends are you familiar with and how do you think they originated?

General Questions

- Allie Jo’s favorite places in The Meriwether are the garden room and the gazebo. What are your favorite places in the book and why?

- What do Tara, Chase, and Allie Jo have in common, and what makes them different from each other? Why do they trust each other?

- If you could meet Tara, what questions would you have for her?
Project Ideas for The Summer of Moonlight Secrets

Science project
Research manatees in the United States and discuss their habitats, eating habits, migration patterns, and social structure in a report. Include something you found surprising. Find out if manatees have any predators or what the biggest threat to their lives is.

Art
Shred colored paper and glue onto a poster board to construct a mosaic of The Meriwether, a manatee, the garden room, or something that was special to you in the story.

Social Studies
The architecture of The Meriwether says a lot about the society during the time in which it was built. How was life different for women and children; what was their place in society? Pretend you are a guest in the 19th century—what would you write on a postcard to your relatives up north? What would you write if you were a nanny?

Technology impacts society in unexpected ways. The railroad made places like The Meriwether sprout overnight and become popular destinations. Chase’s father used a typewriter to complete his assignments, which would then have to be mailed, carried in, or transmitted by a fax machine. Make a list of technologies you use in your every day life. Ask your mother or father what technologies they grew up with that are now obsolete.

Language Arts
The Summer of Moonlight Secrets harbors a legend you might not heard of before. Legends are sometimes peculiar to a place or time. Discuss legends you are familiar with. How do these legends relate to the land from which they originate? Why do legends from long ago still exist?