The Summer House Discussion Questions

1. Do you have any knowledge of or connection to the Alabama Gulf Coast? If so, did this story and its setting in the area around Bon Secour, Alabama, stir any memories for you?

2. Is there a particular character you identify with more? Any character you didn't understand or disagreed with her choices? Was there a character who had any trait you admired?

3. Lily Bishop finds a kind of fresh start in the shady streets and welcoming neighbors of Safe Harbor Village. Have you ever had a time in your life when you had to start over from scratch? If so, what or who helped you through that time?

4. What defines home for you? Has home ever been something other than the place where your family resides? Discuss the idea of finding a home in a person or people instead of just a physical place.

5. Coach lets Rose know that all the villagers at Safe Harbor have some sort of struggle they keep inside. Could you identify with any of the villagers struggles? Have you ever had a situation where you had to cover up your pain or struggle in order to move forward with your life?

6. Rawlins tells Lily that being out on the water is the best way to forget your troubles. Similarly, former psychiatrist Kitty mentions water's healing properties. How do you see characters in the story coming to the water to relieve their hurts or tensions? Do you feel like being near the water does something similar for you?

7. Lily tells Rose her life feels unraveled, as if the death of her mother pulled a string, and each painful event afterwards yanked the string a little bit more. Can you relate at all to the idea of painful events or struggles seeming to come in waves?

8. Rose is surprised to find that her brother Jim is willing to "forgive and forget." How do you think he was able to do that? Should he have required more from her before he asked her to sit at his kitchen table? Have you ever had an old wound you chose to forgive because you missed the person more than you were angry at him or her?