



## SO LONG AT THE FAIR

by Christina Schwarz

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Weaving together past and present in a small Midwestern town, Christina Schwarz beautifully conjures the emotional labyrinth of a marriage on the brink of collapse.

### ABOUT THIS READING GROUP GUIDE

Christina Schwarz, author of the *New York Times* bestseller and Oprah's Book Club pick *Drowning Ruth*, once again turns her storytelling eye to the evocative landscape of Wisconsin, where life is not as simple-or as innocent-as it seems. Beautifully tracing the emotional labyrinth of a marriage on the brink of collapse, *So Long at the Fair* is the story of a man struggling to choose between the wife he still loves and the mistress he desires. Pivoting between a fateful night in 1963 and a contemporary day in the life of a couple you will not soon forget, Schwarz weaves past and present, devotion and deception in a magnificent novel of page-turning intensity.

The questions and topics that follow are intended to enhance your reading of Christina Schwarz's *So Long at the Fair*. We hope they will enrich your experience of this mesmerizing novel.

#### Reader's Guide

1. *So Long at the Fair* reveals the perspectives of multiple characters and dual timelines. In what way did this enhance your reading? How would the storytelling have been affected if you had just seen Jon's point of view?
2. Jon is portrayed as a perfectionist who is compulsively clean and organized. Yet there are glimpses of areas in his life that defy this, such as an unorganized desk drawer, a car glove box in disarray, and his tendency to misquote the lyrics of well-known songs. What is the significance of these contradictions?

3. As the novel alternates between 1963 and the present, the link between the two storylines is gradually revealed. Did you draw any early conclusions about how the characters and events might be connected? Were you correct?
4. How does Christina Schwarz, who was raised in Wisconsin, use this setting as a “character” in her work? How does this setting reflect the characters who inhabit it?
5. Examine the relationship between Jon and Ginny. Do you believe it was truly love that drew them together in the first place, or did other factors influence them? What do you think eventually drove Jon to be unfaithful?
6. If you had been Freddi’s close friend, what advice would you have given her?
7. How did your opinion of Ethan shift throughout the scenes? At what point did you realize his potential to do harm?
8. What parallels exist between Jon and his father, in terms of their personalities as well as the events that altered their lives?
9. What do you think really happened between Walter Fleischer and Hattie in 1963? What were your first impressions of him?
10. How did you react to Marie’s involvement in the events that led to Walter’s car accident in 1963? Do you hold her solely responsible, or did Clark, Bud, or Walter share the blame? Did Bud fully realize the extent of his wife’s deceit?
11. Discuss the role of Kyle (Jon’s brother) in *So Long at the Fair*. How might he have influenced Jon’s actions throughout the novel?
12. What are your theories about Ginny’s reluctance to take a pregnancy test? What was the truth about her struggle to conceive?
13. Discuss some of the possible interpretations for the novel’s title. What outcomes were foreshadowed in the words *So Long at the Fair*?
14. What do you predict for the characters’ futures, including Freddi’s? Do you think Ginny discovers the truth and, if so, does she forgive Jon?
15. How often does the past repeat itself within generations of families you know personally? Do human beings perpetuate cycles of tragedy, or is that primarily a matter of fate?
16. Do the dilemmas in *So Long at the Fair* echo any aspects of the author’s previous novels, *Drowning Ruth* and *All Is Vanity*? What makes Christina’s Schwarz’s approach to fiction unique?