

BESTSELLING AUTHOR  
JENNIFER MOORMAN

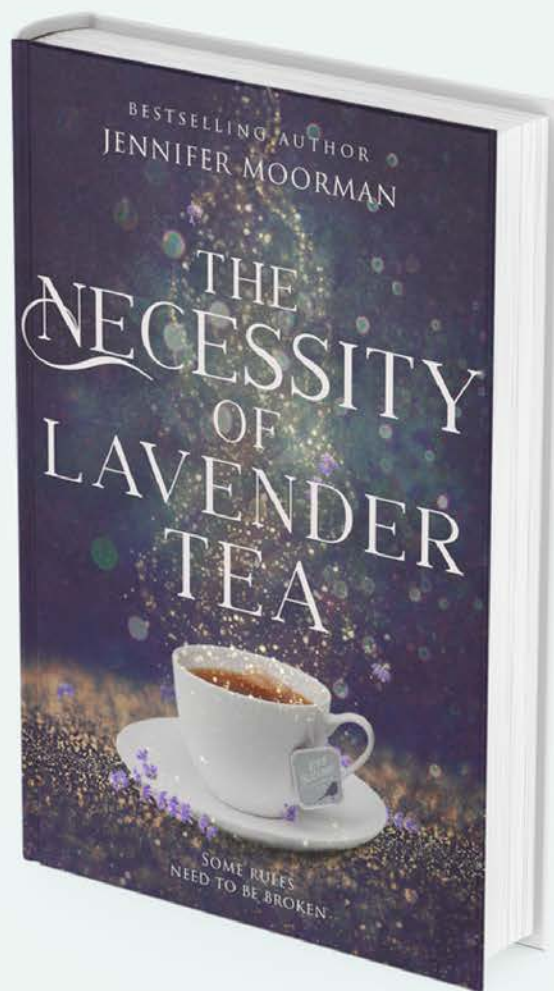
THE  
NECESSITY  
OF  
LAVENDER  
TEA



SOME RULES

READING GROUP GUIDE





This reading group guide for *The Baker's Man* includes an introduction, discussion questions, ideas for enhancing your book club, and bonus material to elevate your experience.

The suggested questions are intended to help you find interesting topics and new perspectives for your discussion.

We hope that this guide will add more magic to your conversation and increase your enjoyment of the book.

Like most teenagers coming of age in the 1950s, Kate Muir wants the basics—rock and roll and a sense of belonging. But for Kate, one thing she can't live without is her endless supply of lavender tea.

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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- 1.** In this coming-of-age story, Kate feels as though she is outgrowing some of the rules her parents have given her. She wants to assert her independence but is also weary of changes. How do you feel she approaches these shifts? Do you think she would have felt better about some of the situations if she had been honest? Why or why not?
- 2.** Kate doesn't fit in because of her upbringing, her skin color, and the way she responds to certain situations. One way she tries to fit in is by allowing the girls to give her a makeover and change her style. Have you ever changed yourself for someone else? What was the result?
- 3.** Kate desperately wants to conform to what Geoffrey wants. What do you think of their relationship? Do you think Geoffrey's feelings for Kate were sincere? Why or why not?
- 4.** Kate's mama calls her visions "a curse." Ama teaches Kate how to control and suppress her visions. Yet the elder, Aurora Catawnee, in the Cherokee village and Kate's brother, Evan, refer to Kate's visions as a gift. Would you describe Kate's talent as a curse or a gift?
- 5.** Matthias seems to see Kate for who she really is. Do you think Matthias has more-than-friendly feelings for Kate early in the story? If so, why do you think he doesn't say anything about Geoffrey dating her?



**6.** Kate had a special bond with her brother, Evan. How do you think this relationship guides her in the way she responds to life, people, and even to herself? Do you have a sibling? If so, does your sibling relationship affect how you see the world and the people around you?

**7.** Kate's mama warns that she can't change the future regardless of what visions she sees. How do you think this burdens her? Do you believe that if she told people about her visions, it would change the course of the future or do you believe in fate?

**8.** If you had visions of the future, would you tell your friends, even if you knew they might respond negatively? How would you respond if someone approached you and told you they'd had a vision about you? Would you want to hear it? Why or why not?

**9.** This is the second book in the Mystic Water series, but it is more of an origin story, taking you back to the 1950s. What makes you want to return to Mystic Water? What do you think will happen to some of the characters?

**10.** Who would you cast if a TV show or movie was made of this novel? What songs would you use for a soundtrack?

# ELEVATE YOUR EXPERIENCE

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**1.** Today there are more than five hundred Native tribes in North America. Research the state you live in, and find out what tribes live or lived there. What were their lives like? What languages did they speak? Did they farm or hunt? What traditions were special to them? Share your discoveries with the group.

**2.** Set the mood and the scene of the book's era. Create a playlist full of the top songs of the 1950s, and play it during your book club. Whip up some of the most popular recipes from that decade, such as molded strawberry pie, baked ham with pineapple, cherry nut cake, lemon chiffon cake, grapefruit Alaska, ambrosia salad, meatloaf, and gelatin salad.

**3.** Perhaps you've felt like an outcast at some point in your life or as though you were watching life from the sidelines. Share a time when someone in your life made you feel as though you belonged just as you are. How did this friend or moment change your life for the better?

**4.** Learn what else Jennifer is up to online at [jennifermoorman.com](http://jennifermoorman.com).



# LAVENDER COOKIES

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*These light, buttery cookies have a subtle floral aroma. One bite will settle any restless heart and open the door for peace and calm. Paired with a cup of tea, these are perfect for a cozy day.*

**Prep Time:** 20 minutes

**Baking Time:** 10 minutes

**Chilling Time:** 30 minutes

**Total:** 1 hour

**Yield:** 20 cookies

## Ingredients

2 cups all-purpose flour

½ cup (1 stick) salted butter, cold

½ cup granulated sugar

1 teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon dried food-grade lavender buds

## **Directions**

- 1.** Crush the dried lavender into smaller bits.
- 2.** In the bowl of stand mixer fitted with a paddle attachment, beat the sugar and butter until pale and fluffy, about two minutes. Add the crushed lavender and salt and mix for another minute.
- 3.** Sift the flour into the butter-sugar mixture. Add 1 to 2 tablespoons of ice-cold water, and mix on low until just incorporated.
- 4.** Turn out dough onto parchment paper, and knead for just a few seconds to combine all the crumbles into the dough. The dough should be soft but not sticky. If the dough seems too sticky, add 1 tablespoon flour at a time until it just starts to come together.
- 5.** Transfer the dough to a piece of plastic wrap. Shape the dough into a log about 2 inches in diameter and 8 inches long.
- 6.** Wrap up the log in plastic wrap, and put it into the freezer for 30 minutes to 1 hour.
- 7.** Line two cookie sheets with parchment paper, and preheat the oven to 325°F.
- 8.** Remove the dough from freezer and unwrap. Using a sharp knife, slice thin rounds off the log, and place them on the baking sheet, spacing the cookies 2 inches apart.
- 9.** Bake for 10 to 12 minutes. Watch the cookies closely while baking so they don't overbake. It's okay if the cookies look soft and underbaked. They continue to cook as they cool.
- 10.** Let cookies cool on the cookie sheet for 10 to 15 minutes or until they are set enough to be handled. Transfer the cookies to a wire rack, and cool completely.



## DOUBLE CHOCOLATE CHUNK BROWNIES

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*These chewy, chocolately brownies are baked up in Bea's Bakery every week. For chocolate lovers and those who are falling in love and need to calm their nerves.*

**Prep Time:** 20 minutes

**Baking Time:** 22 minutes

**Cooling Time:** 15 minutes

**Total:** 1 hour

**Yield:** 12 large brownies



## Ingredients

1 cup plus 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour  
¾ teaspoon salt  
¼ teaspoon kosher salt  
½ teaspoon baking powder  
4 large eggs at room temperature  
1 ½ cups granulated sugar  
½ cup packed brown sugar  
½ cup canola oil  
2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract  
½ cup (1 stick) unsalted butter  
8 ounces dark chocolate chunks  
¼ cup cocoa powder

## Directions

- 1.** Preheat oven to 350°F. Spray with cooking spray a 9 x 13-inch baking pan, and line with a parchment paper sling.
- 2.** In a large bowl, whisk together the eggs, granulated and brown sugars, canola oil, and vanilla.
- 3.** Place the butter in a small microwave-safe bowl, and microwave in 15-second increments until melted. Add cocoa powder, and whisk until completely combined.
- 4.** Add the butter-cocoa mixture to the sugar-egg mixture, and whisk until smooth.
- 5.** Add the flour mixture, and stir until just combined. Fold in the chocolate chunks.
- 6.** Pour the batter into prepared baking dish, and bake for 22–27 minutes, or until the edges are set and the top looks crackled.
- 7.** Transfer pan to a wire rack, and let cool completely. Cut the brownies into squares and serve. Store brownies in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 2 days.

# THE NECESSITY OF LAVENDER TEA PLAYLIST

[Listen on Spotify Here!](#)

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- "Only You" by The Platters
- "That'll Be The Day" by Buddy Holly
- "Jailhouse Rock" by Elvis Presley
- "The Great Pretender" by The Platters
- "Rock Around the Clock" by Bill Haley
- "Yakety Yak" by The Coasters
- "Jonny B. Goode" by Chuck Berry
- "Unforgettable" by Nat King Cole
- "You Belong to Me" by The Duprees
- "That's Amore" by Dean Martin
- "Sixty Minute Man" by Billy Ward & The Dominoes
- "Chattanooga Shoe Shine Boy" by Freddie Cannon
- "Shake Rattle and Roll" by Bill Haley & His Comets
- "Goodnight Sweetheart Goodnight" by The Spaniels

...and more!



## A conversation with Jennifer Moorman



**Q:** Was the title of your book, *The Necessity of Lavender Tea*, always the title?

**A:** No. When I originally wrote this book, it was approximately 15,000 words shorter and a novella. The original title was *Little Blackbird*. After Harper Muse relaunched *The Baker's Man*, I wanted to give the entire Mystic Water Series a lovely relaunch too, which included lengthening and editorially refreshing this entire book. We also created a brand-new cover to match the new branding of *The Baker's Man*, and during the process of reimagining the storyline, we decided to revise the title too so that it would be more aligned with magical realism titles today.



**Q: Who's the main character of your book—and was that always their name?**

**A:** Kate Muir, *Little Blackbird*, is the main character, and her name was always Kate. I researched Scottish last names during the writing and landed on a nod to my heritage. According to genealogy, Muir is an early way of spelling Moor, which referred to Scots who worked the water: "Muir man." You can see how this evolved into Moorman. It's a fun Easter egg in the story, mostly for myself!

**Q: At the start of the book, what's the character's goal?**

**A:** Kate wants to escape into the summertime and spend her days outside or in the garden where she feels most comfortable and free. This, obviously, isn't how her summer goes.

**Q: What was the core idea for this novel—a plot point? a theme?—and where did it come from?**

**A:** I didn't start the novel with a theme in mind, but I knew it would be about a girl who didn't quite fit in and the lengths we often go to change ourselves in order to fit in. I wanted to show the struggles we sometimes feel and how accepting ourselves just as we are and being true to ourselves is when the struggle actually stops.

**Q: At what point did you come up with the final version of the first line? What is it?**

**A:** The original first few lines were very close to what they are now, but during this editorial refresh, I wanted to drive home, even more, the idea that Kate begins her journey believing her gift is a curse and that it will destroy her. So the new lines convey more intensely that idea.



**First two lines:** Kate Muir couldn't stop the inevitable. Couldn't stop dragging around a worthless, damaged ability that would, year after year, destroy her.

**Q: Did you know the ending of the book when you started?**

**A:** I had a good idea of how I wanted it to end. Of course, the characters a lot of what they want once I start writing.

**Q: What's something in this book that you've never done before?**

**A:** I've never let a friend cut my hair! I've never even cut my own hair. I can't imagine letting a high school friend give me a hair cut, and I certainly wouldn't have offered to cut hair!

**Q: How do you want readers to feel when they close the book?**

**A:** I hope readers feel uplifted, hopeful, and surrounded by the magic of the everyday. I hope they see that being true to yourself and loving yourself is one of the greatest things you can do . . . for everyone.

**Q: What did you learn from this book? About writing, or life, or the writing life?**

**A:** I learned a lot about the Natives and about their lives, what they grew, how they lived, and how some of them fought back to stay where they were. I also learned that not everyone was "against" them. There were many people who cared about them and wanted to help. Writing this novel continued me on a path toward happiness and wholeness, and I am continuously grateful for creativity and for the people who love sharing these stories with me.



joe-pye weed  
helibore  
Laisies



reread  
Peter Pan

Tuesday, March 14, 2023

Happy Birtnauy, Little Blackbird!

I am hoping this letter arrives to  
you on your birthday— at least  
that is what I requested of the  
letter as I dropped it into the  
postbox. I'm sending one <sup>to</sup>  
start the festivities  
promise that I will



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