

The Second Summer of the Sisterhood Study Guide

**The Second Summer of the Sisterhood by Ann
Brashares**

(c)2015 BookRags, Inc. All rights reserved.



Contents

The Second Summer of the Sisterhood Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Pages 1 - 46.....	5
Pages 47 - 93.....	7
Pages 94 - 140.....	9
Pages 141 - 179.....	11
Pages 180 - 220.....	13
Pages 221 - 261.....	15
Pages 262 - 304.....	17
Pages 305 - 351.....	19
Pages 352 - 373.....	21
Characters.....	23
Objects/Places.....	26
Themes.....	28
Style.....	31
Quotes.....	33
Topics for Discussion.....	36



Plot Summary

The *Second Summer of the Sisterhood*, by Ann Brashares, is a sequel to the author's earlier work, *The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants*. The first book follows four teenage girls through their 16th summer and this novel picks up their lives as they begin their 17th summer. The girls are lifelong friends who also share a pair of pants as part of their bond.

As summer begins, Tibby Tomko-Rollins is heading to a nearby college where she will spend several weeks studying film, while Carmen Lowell and Lena Kaligaris stay at home in Bethesda, Maryland. Bridget Vreeland abandons her plan to stay at home when she finds several letters from her maternal grandmother, from whom her father has been estranged for many years since her mother's death. Bridget decides to go to Alabama to see her grandmother and look for answers that might help her reconnect with herself after a year of floundering.

When she arrives in Alabama, Bridget impulsively decides not to tell her grandmother, Greta, who she is, but instead gets a job doing odd jobs around her house, primarily clearing out the attic where many of Bridget's mother's personal mementos are stored. As she works her way through the boxes, she learns that her mother was diagnosed with a mental illness while in college and spent time in an institution, where she contemplated suicide. As they get to know each other better, Greta gradually reveals information that helps Bridget understand her mother, father, brother, and herself better, and eventually she is able to recall finding her mother dead from suicide. Bridget also reconnects with a childhood friend, Billy Kline, and through him rediscovers her love of soccer, which used to be an important part of her life.

At film school, Tibby seeks the friendship of Alex and Maura, two fellow students who seem worldly and sophisticated to her. When her awkward, nerdy friend Brian visits, she tries to keep him away from her new friends, who treat him rudely when they do meet. Tibby is struggling with a number of issues, including the feeling that her parents prefer her two much-younger siblings to her, and her grief over the death of 12-year-old Bailey, a girl she met and befriended the previous summer. After hurting her mother's feelings with a film that pokes fun at her, Tibby changes her summer project to a film tribute to Bailey, which helps her reunite with Brian, see the shallowness of Alex and Maura, and learn which people are truly important in her life.

Carmen hopes to find love during the summer, but instead it is her divorced mother, Christina, who gets a boyfriend, sending Carmen into a tailspin of jealousy and anger. Carmen is so upset over her mother's relationship that she alienates a boy who is obviously interested in her, and ends up destroying her mother's romance with David, which breaks Christina's heart. When her stepsister runs away from home and lands on Carmen's doorstep, her father, stepmother and stepbrother arrive and Carmen eventually realizes that although her family is not a traditional one, they are indeed a family. Seeing that her father's happiness with his new wife does not diminish his



feelings for her, Carmen patches things up between her mother and David and realizes that other people's happiness does not have a negative effect on her own.

Lena begins the summer trying to sort out her feelings for Kostos, a boy she fell in love with while visiting her grandparents in Greece the previous summer. She is surprised when Kostos arrives on her doorstep and once she decides to face her fears about the relationship, they rekindle their romance. However, Kostos suddenly cools things off and returns to Greece with little explanation, although he insists that he still loves Lena. When her grandfather dies suddenly, Lena and her family go to Greece for his funeral and she learns the truth — Kostos briefly dated another girl and got her pregnant, and has done the honorable thing by marrying her. Although she is heartbroken, Lena is able to lean on her friends for support and in the end appears to be on the verge of a new relationship with Carmen's stepbrother.

By the end of the novel, all four girls have experienced a great deal of pain, but grown significantly because of it. Their experiences over the course of the summer also help renew their mothers' friendship, which had paralleled their own relationship but faded with time.



Pages 1 - 46

Pages 1 - 46 Summary

The Second Summer of the Sisterhood, by Ann Brashares, is a sequel to the author's previous novel The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants. The book follows the lives of four teenage girls — Lena Kaligaris, Bridget Vreeland, Tibby Tomko-Rollins, and Carmen Lowell during their 17th summer. The girls have been close friends all their lives and a year earlier, they were separated for the first time when each of them spent the summer in a different location. Just before they separated, Carmen bought a pair of jeans that miraculously fit all four of them perfectly even though they are of very different sizes. Deciding that the pants were somehow magical, the girls shipped them to their various locations during the summer so each could share their special powers.

This sequel begins with a prologue narrated by Lena in which she explains the history of the girls' relationship and the history of the pants. Their mothers met in a pregnancy aerobics class and became close friends, so the girls grew up together. Although their mothers have drifted apart and Bridget's mother has died, the girls have remained the best of friends. She notes that all of them had planned to stay at home this summer with the exception of Tibby, who was going away to film school, but Bridget (nicknamed Bee) never met a plan she didn't want to change, so the summer didn't go as planned.

As the story opens, Bridget finds a series of letters, written over a period of five years, from her maternal grandmother, with whom she has not had contact for several years. She confronts her father about why he didn't give her the letters and when he doesn't give her a satisfactory answer, she decides to go to Alabama to see her grandmother. Bridget has changed a lot in recent months. At soccer camp the previous summer, she fell for a guy and was badly hurt, and since then she's quit soccer, gained weight and dyed her blonde hair a darker color. She feels that she might have lost herself and hopes that going to Alabama might help her reconnect.

The night before Bridget and Tibby are to leave, the girls conduct their annual ritual of breaking into Gilda's Aerobics Studio where their mothers met and where they ceremoniously bring out the pants, which they have vowed to wear only during the summer.

The following day, Bridget takes a bus to Burgess, Alabama and rents a room. Tibby arrives at Williamstown College to attend a summer film program and notes that her parents seem more excited about it than she does. She is hurt because she feels that they favor her two much-younger siblings and are anxious to be rid of her for the summer. Lena gets a job at Basia's, a boutique favored by her mother, and writes a letter to Kostos, the boy she fell in love with the previous summer when she was in Greece. Although she broke up with him a while back, she still misses him. Carmen goes on an uncomfortable date with a boy named Porter, and at the end she is unsure



whether he considered it a good date or not. When she gets home, she is astonished to find that her mother is not home to quiz her about her evening.

Pages 1 - 46 Analysis

The prologue and initial chapters provide background information for readers who are not familiar with *The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants*, the book on which this novel is based. It establishes the girls' deep, lifelong friendship and the fact that everything in their history has been shared. The reader is given several pieces of information that help explain how each girl came to this place in her life. Bridget is having a particularly bad time since the death of her mother and a romantic relationship that went terribly wrong, and her friends are deeply concerned about her well-being. Always impulsive, she is now lost and confused. However, Carmen notes that she is not unhappy about Bridget's plan to go to Alabama because she has felt something begin to shift in her friend.

Lena is shown to be a very sweet, loving friend who still has mixed feelings for Kostos, a boy she met the previous summer. She also has mixed feelings about her Greek heritage — she feels pride but is also embarrassed at times by her mother, Ari. Carmen, who lives in an apartment with her mother since her parents' divorce, is outgoing with a smart mouth, and very conscious of her Hispanic heritage. Tibby is resentful of her parents' attention to Nicky, her 3-year-old brother, and feels that her parents buy her expensive electronics to make up for their preference for their younger children. This feeling is given validity when her parents abandon their plans to have lunch with her as they drop her off at her film school after they receive a call saying that Nicky has gotten sick.

This section also includes vague references to people and experiences that will come into play later in the novel, such as Tibby's friend Bailey, who is referenced here but not explained.



Pages 47 - 93

Pages 47 - 93 Summary

Bridget goes to the home of her grandmother, Greta, who doesn't recognize her because it has been so long since they've seen each other and her appearance has changed. Rather than telling her who she really is, Bridget introduces herself as Gilda Tomko and says a neighbor suggested that Greta needed someone to help her with some projects around her house. Greta agrees to hire her and says that her first project will be cleaning out the attic.

Carmen learns that her mother, Christina, had been on a date the night before, and Christina is very enthusiastic about it. She can't stop talking about her evening, giving Carmen no chance to tell her about her own evening with Porter.

Lena's sister, Effie, tells Lena that their grandparents called from Greece, saying there had been a large party and Kostos had brought a new girlfriend. Lena pretends not to care, but she is bothered by it.

Bridget finds places she remembers from her childhood, and she recalls learning to play soccer here in Burgess. As she's sitting next to the soccer field, some teenage boys arrive and begin to scrimmage. She recognizes a few who played with her in a summer league when they were children, including Billy Kline, the best player except for her.

Tibby seeks the friendship of fellow film students Alex and Maura. The class is assigned to make one film during the summer, a biographical piece focusing on someone who is important in their life. Tibby considers making a film about Bailey, her friend who died the previous summer at age 12, but the memory is too painful so she decides to make a comic film about her mother instead.

At Carmen's house, Christina asks Lena about Kostos and Lena tells her they broke up. Christina says that the long-distance relationship must have been hard, much like Lena's mother's several-year relationship with Eugene. Lena knows nothing about this, but when she asks for details, Christina clams up and says she must have been mistaken. Later, Lena asks her mother who Eugene is, but Ari refuses to discuss it.

Carmen is not happy when her mother says that David, the man she's been seeing, wants to take both of them to dinner. Carmen lies and says she has a date with Porter that night, but her mother says he can come too.

Tibby's friend Brian visits her at film school and both of them think about Bailey, even though they have agreed not to talk about her because it makes Tibby too sad.



Pages 47 - 93 Analysis

Much of this section is a continuing set-up for the most important aspects of the story. Bridget arrives in Alabama and connects with her grandmother, Lena learns that Kostos apparently has moved on with another girl, Tibby gets involved with new friends at film school and is reminded of Bailey, and Carmen struggles with her mother's new romance.

The strong connection between Bridget and her friends is made clear when she chooses the name Gilda, referring to the aerobics studio where their mothers met and Tomko, referring to the first part of Tibby's much-hated hyphenated last name. Greta's first project for her new employee is cleaning out her attic, which is a stroke of irony since Bridget has come to Burgess to reconnect with her past, and foreshadows several events to come. Her feeling of disconnection is further manifested in the fact that even though she meets several people who were important parts of her childhood, no one recognizes her anymore. The changes in her physical appearance, including weight gain and a change in her hair color, are symbolic of the psychological changes she's continuing to struggle with.

Denial is becoming a major theme in this section as Lena denies that she is upset by the fact that Kostos has a new girlfriend, and her mother denies that she had a prior relationship with someone named Eugene. Tibby, too, is in denial, as she refuses to give in to her grief about Bailey's death.



Pages 94 - 140

Pages 94 - 140 Summary

Carmen and Porter go to dinner with her mother and David, and Carmen is very uncomfortable. Although she can't find anything wrong with David, she is distracted and unhappy with the closeness he obviously shares with her mother.

Lena re-reads the letters she has received from Kostos and reviews the course of their relationship. Things went well until December, when Lena cooled things off and then broke up with him. It makes her sad to think she'll never see him again.

Bridget receives the pants, but is devastated when they won't fit because she has gained too much weight. At her grandmother's house, she goes through several boxes of her late mother's belongings. Her mother, Marly, was a vivacious child and teenager, and Bridget wonders how someone like that came from Greta, who is old and overweight.

Carmen has dinner at Lena's house and is upset when her mother is very late picking her up because she has been at a baseball game with David. When they get home, Carmen tells her mother she hates her.

Tibby is in her dorm room with Brian and he is playing a classical music recording. Tibby is surprised when he begins whistling along with the music and asks him how he knows it. He tells her that his father, who is dead, was a musician and used to play it. Tibby feels guilty because she realizes she has never asked him anything about his family or his life. The following day, she goes to breakfast with Alex and Maura but does not invite Brian, and she wonders why she didn't want her friends to meet him.

Bridget watches Billy's soccer team scrimmage and flirts with him, although he doesn't recognize it as flirting because her personality has changed so much. Carmen and Lena exchange instant messages in which they agree that Brian is in love with Tibby, but she doesn't see it. When Tibby comes home for the weekend, Lena is at her house and casually asks her mother, Alice, about Eugene. Thinking Lena already knows about him, Alice confirms that he was a Greek boy who broke Ari's heart, and mentions that he came to visit when Lena was a baby.

Going through her mother's belongings, Bridget finds a document indicating that her mother was admitted to a mental institution during the year after she finished high school. She was there for several months and talked about suicide. Later, Bridget learns more about her parents when Greta begins telling her about her daughter. She says that Marly was fine until her first year of college, when she was diagnosed with a mental illness and hospitalized. After she returned to college, she fell in love with her history professor, Franz, and they got married. The relationship cost Bridget's father his job and



the couple moved to Washington, D.C. Bridget knew her parents met in college, but not that her father was her mother's professor.

Lena questions her mother about Eugene, but Ari gets angry and refuses to talk about him. All the girls and their families attend Tibby's family's Fourth of July party, where the girls witness a tense conversation among their mothers and learn that Ari is angry because she thinks Christina or Alice told Lena about Eugene.

Pages 94 - 140 Analysis

Carmen's previously-close relationship with her mother is beginning to disintegrate quickly because of Carmen's resentment toward Christina's new boyfriend. However, the situation is made worse by the fact that Christina's blinding happiness makes her oblivious to Carmen's anger and neither of them makes an effort to talk about it. Although Carmen previously hoped that, for her, the pants would be "love pants" this summer and bring her a romance of her own, she unwittingly pushes away a boy who is clearly interested in her because she is so distracted and appalled by her mother's new relationship.

A parallel between Lena's relationship with Kostos and her mother's relationship with Eugene is beginning to emerge, but Lena is still in the dark about the nature of her mother's early romance. Things become more mysterious, and therefore more tantalizing, when Christina suddenly clams up and Ari gets angry and refuses to talk about Eugene after Lena asks about him. Alice only reveals information she thinks Lena already knows, and the mystery of Eugene causes a rift in the already-cooled relationship among the mothers.

Just as Lena deceives Alice regarding her knowledge about Eugene, Bridget continues to deceive her grandmother about her identity and like Lena, she uses the situation to gain information about her mother. A picture of Marly is slowly beginning to emerge and Bridget is having trouble reconciling the bright, vivacious teenager with the troubled woman her mother later became, but the pieces start to come together with the discovery that her mother had been diagnosed and hospitalized for a mental illness and had considered suicide.

Tibby is struggling with her feelings toward Brian. They have been close friends and she values that, but she is also embarrassed by his awkwardness and tries to keep him away from her new friends. She is attracted to Alex and Maura because she thinks they are worldly and cerebral, and she goes along when Maura makes fun of Vanessa, the resident advisor in their dorm, because her room is full of toys. However, she is beginning to move toward a bit more self-awareness as she wonders whether her real motivation is to keep Brian from seeing the side of her personality she is showing to Alex and Maura, and she begins to realize that although she knows that Brian has serious issues regarding his family and home life, she has never cared enough to dig further.



Pages 141 - 179

Pages 141 - 179 Summary

As Tibby is working on her movie with Alex, she finds herself attracted to him and also a little in awe of him. Brian comes to visit again and when Tibby shows him parts of her film, he suggests that her mother's feelings will be hurt by it because it pokes fun at her. Tibby brushes him off, saying that her mother won't come to Parents Day anyway. Although she knows very little about Brian, Tibby realizes that he has had a sad life.

Lena and Tibby talk on the phone and Tibby reveals that she filmed part of the argument between their mothers, but not the ending. The girls get into a rare argument when they break their longstanding rule about never criticizing each other's mothers.

Carmen goes on another date with Porter. She tries to call her mother, but her phone is turned off. Carmen then remembers that earlier in the day, Christina was fixing up the apartment, so she assumes her mother is planning to bring David home for sex that night, a thought that horrifies her. She tells Porter that she's sick so she can go home, but no one is there when she arrives, which makes her feel oddly sad. She decides to pack up the pants for Tibby, but can't find them. When her mother gets home, Carmen is appalled to see that she is wearing the pants. Christina says she found them on the kitchen counter and thought Carmen had left them for her to wear as a peace offering, but Carmen is furious. Christina tries to assure Carmen that her relationship with David won't change anything between them, but Carmen thinks it already has.

Bridget continues working in the attic and going through boxes of her mother's memorabilia. During lunch, Greta talks to Bridget about her grandchildren, mentioning her granddaughter in particular. She reveals that she lived with the family for Bridget's first six months — something Bridget did not know — and that Marly struggled after she left. She says that her granddaughter was always feisty and independent, but her twin brother was a little lost in her shadow.

When Tibby gets a notice that two packages have arrived for her, she is happy to go to Vanessa's room to pick them up, because she wants to see the toys that Maura has made fun of. The toys turn out to be colorful stuffed animals that Vanessa has made, but rather than finding them silly, Tibby thinks they're wonderfully creative, and she is surprised to find herself saying that her little brother would love them. Vanessa is thrilled with the praise for her talents, and Tibby feels bad that Maura makes fun of the animals. Returning to her room, Tibby opens the packages. One contains the pants, and the other is from her parents — brownies, drawings from her younger siblings, and a funny drawing from her mom saying "miss you." Tibby realizes she misses them too.

Carmen is still furious with her mother. When Christina goes out to buy a newspaper, David calls and leaves a message on the answering machine and Carmen accidentally erases it. She muses about her relationship with her mother, which has always been



very close, but now Carmen wonders if she has just been filling a space because her mother didn't have anyone else.

The day of Tibby's movie premiere arrives, which is also Parents Day. Tibby is shocked to see her mother in the audience, and as her movie ends, she can hear her mom quietly crying. When the lights come on, her mother is gone. Tibby is forced to include Brian when she goes to a restaurant with Alex and Maura, who are very rude to Brian, eventually forcing him to leave. Tibby does nothing.

Pages 141 - 179 Analysis

Tibby's struggle with her conscience continues in this section as she tries to brush Brian off in favor of the more-sophisticated Alex and Maura. However, she begins to see a different, less attractive side of Maura when she realizes that the toys she jokes about are not toys at all, but stuffed animals Vanessa has designed and made. Tibby previously looked up to Maura but now realizes that while Maura can't even complete the script for her film, Vanessa is a true artist. Tibby is also gradually seeing a different side of her family and her relationship with them. Even though she claims to despise her younger siblings, her thoughts go immediately to Nicky when she sees the stuffed animals and realizes how much he would love them, and she is touched more than she wants to admit by the drawings he and their sister have made for her. By the end of the section, though, she still has not matured enough to stand up for Brian when her friends berate him openly and force him to leave the restaurant. Tibby also has yet to realize that Brian is the friend who really knows her because while Alex and Maura think her film is wonderful, Brian knows how much it would hurt her mother.

Carmen's relationship with her mother hits rock bottom as Carmen's feelings about Christina's relationship with David spin completely out of control. Although Carmen realizes she is behaving terribly, she compares herself to an alcoholic when it comes to anger. Once she begins to feel anger, she says, she is powerless to control it, and when her mother makes an understandable mistake by thinking Carmen left the pants on the counter for her, Carmen blows the situation out of proportion, which is typical of her personality. Readers who are familiar with the earlier book will draw a parallel between this behavior and her reaction to learning that her father planned to remarry. Although erasing David's message is an accident, Carmen does nothing to correct the situation even when her mother is clearly disappointed that David didn't call her as she'd expected him to, and Carmen's insecurities are further evident when she begins to question whether her mother really loves her or has simply been filling a void because she didn't have another relationship.

Bridget's family life comes into sharper focus as her grandmother continues to slowly dole out information about her childhood, revealing some guilt on Greta's part that she didn't do more to teach Marly after Bridget and Perry were born, as opposed to simply helping her for a few months.



Pages 180 - 220

Pages 180 - 220 Summary

Tibby goes home to Bethesda to look for Brian. She goes to his house, but he isn't there, and when she finds him in a park, he walks away from her. Unable to face her mother, she shoves the pants through the mail slot at Lena's house. She then visits Bailey's grave and feels completely lost. She goes home and wakes her mother, who welcomes her without any recriminations about the film. When she returns to school, Tibby realizes that Bailey would have recognized Alex as a poser. She anonymously leaves a bag of gummies and a supportive note for Vanessa.

Lena is sitting in her room in her underwear, feeling miserable, when Effie brings someone up the stairs. Lena is unable to close her door before the visitor sees her. It's Kostos, who is in the U.S. for a month and is spending the weekend with a family who lives nearby. He stays only a few minutes and during that time, Lena is so uncomfortable that she never speaks to him. She imagines herself stopping him as he leaves, but doesn't.

Christina breaks up with David on the phone as Carmen listens, realizing she's succeeded in ruining her mother's relationship. A few days later, she tells Tibby that her mother hasn't gotten out of bed in three days, and Tibby suggests that it might help to tell her about David's call, but Carmen just snaps at her. Carmen feels bad for making Tibby feel worse when she was clearly already unhappy.

Bridget continues to attend soccer games, then buys a soccer ball and kicks it around by herself.

Carmen is at a fast food restaurant when she is shocked to run into her younger stepsister, Krista, who has left her home in South Carolina after a fight with her mother. Carmen agrees to let her stay for a few days. Carmen calls her stepbrother, Paul, who tells her that Krista is trying to be exactly like Carmen. When Carmen looks more closely at Krista's changed appearance and behavior, she sees that it's true and she doesn't like feeling responsible for it.

Pages 180 - 220 Analysis

Tibby has begun to learn what is really important in her life, and it isn't the new friends she wanted so badly to fit in with, but it might be too late to get back to where she wants to be. When she goes to Brian's house and meets his gruff and uncaring stepfather, then finds Brian wandering alone in a park rather than going to his unhappy home, she sees even more clearly how miserable his life is, but he wants nothing to do with her. She knows that the one person who would understand is Bailey, so she tries to find comfort in going to her grave and talking with her, but she ends up just feeling more lost than ever. Things begin to turn around when she finally goes home and sneaks into her



mother's bedroom during the night. Rather than being angry, her mother looks worried, then simply hugs her, proving to Tibby that her anger over feeling that Alice prefers her younger siblings is misplaced. As she begins to see things through Bailey's eyes, she sees Alex and Maura for the shallow people they really are, and she leaves a gift and anonymous note for Vanessa as a way of making up for Maura's poor treatment of her and Tibby's initial support of Maura's attitude.

Lena must face her conflicted feelings about Kostos when he arrives unexpectedly at her house, but she is so shocked she is unable to speak to him. She is also hurt that he didn't get in touch with her to tell her he was coming, but her fears keep her from going after him to talk, and he leaves with things still unresolved between them. Lena has been fearful for much of her life, and although she knows it, she doesn't understand where it comes from and is unable to get past it, even for something she wants very much.

Carmen continues to wrestle with her conscious when her mother breaks off her relationship. She knows that David was making her mother very happy, but although she realizes that she is being selfish and petty, she is known for being headstrong and she stubbornly refuses to tell her mother the truth and discuss the situation openly. The situation becomes more complicated when Krista arrives and Carmen realizes that the stepsister she treated badly and whose style she made fun of has now turned herself into a carbon copy of Carmen. This section begins to introduce Paul, who is a minor character but will play a more important role in the plot as the book nears the end.

Prior to the previous summer, soccer played a huge role in Bridget's life, so her purchase of the soccer ball symbolizes the fact that she is slowly beginning to reconnect with the parts of herself that she had lost.



Pages 221 - 261

Pages 221 - 261 Summary

Tibby buys a copy of the concerto she and Brian had listened to earlier, noting that she has a lot of work to do in only nine days. She has a DVD that will be part of her film, but she is unable to bear watching it yet. Realizing that Alex and Maura aren't who she wanted them to be, she tells Alex about her friendship with Brian, that her movie was shallow and awful, and that Vanessa is a better artist than she, Alex or Maura will ever be.

Carmen's mother agrees to let Krista stay, even though it's awkward since she is her ex-husband's stepdaughter. Christina is still very sad and delosate, and Carmen feels like an agent of destruction for both her mother and Krista.

Lena's mother invites Kostos over for dinner. He is charming, but Lena continues to feel uncomfortable. When she feels a shoe brush against her foot during dinner, she finally admits to herself that she still loves him, but when she brushes back, she realizes the foot belongs to Effie. Later, unable to sleep, Lena sneaks out and goes to the home where Kostos is staying. He comes outside and she confesses that the reason she broke up with him was that she missed him so much that it felt as if her life didn't belong to her anymore. He says he still loves her and they spend the rest of the night kissing on the lawn.

Bridget finishes her work in the attic, which is now a beautiful room suitable for Greta to rent to someone. Greta is thrilled with the results and when she asks Bridget to move in, Bridget happily accepts.

Tibby finally watches the video she made the previous summer, including the day she met Brian. Seeing Bailey makes her cry, but also inspires her.

Carmen's stepbrother, Paul, arrives to check on his sister, and Carmen tells her about erasing David's message. Paul says she was jealous and makes her realize that perhaps she was jealous of David rather than her mother.

Lena and Kostos meet late the following night and make out, but decide not to go further. He says he'll come back the next weekend.

Bridget goes out for a milkshake with Billy, who says she looks familiar but is still unable to place her. She is sad because she's no longer the girl boys have crushes on, but thinks that friendship feels OK too.

Carmen's father and stepmother, Al and Lydia, arrive to pick up Krista, and Tibby continues working on her film, which is now about Bailey.



Pages 221 - 261 Analysis

Tibby's maturation process continues at a rapid pace in this section. When she decides to make a film about Bailey, she is symbolically returning to her authentic self because that was the topic she initially considered before being influenced by her attraction to Alex and Maura and her desire to make a film that would make Alex laugh. She also gives a symbolic nod to Brian by choosing the music they'd listened to together as her soundtrack, knowing that the piece meant a lot to him because his late father had played it. She completes the process by coming clean to Alex about how close she is to Brian, and letting him know that she respects Vanessa's artistic talents more than those of Maura. She takes another step by facing her sorrow about Bailey's death and watching the video she'd shot of her the previous summer, and she finds that she is free to feel her grief, but also use it to inspire her to do things that would make Bailey proud.

Carmen is also making progress, although it is slow. She is gradually coming to terms with how unhappy her mother is since her relationship with David ended, and seeing the negative changes in Krista — changes she made to be more like Carmen — make her realize how destructive she has been to both of them. Her talk with Paul, who is a man of few words but always has the ability to see through Carmen, makes her realize that perhaps she was not jealous of her mother's happiness as she had previously thought, but rather she was jealous of the fact that it was David making her happy rather than Carmen herself. She has been accustomed to a life that included just her mother and herself, and is now beginning to see that she was afraid of losing her mother to someone else.

Lena is finally able to admit that she still has feelings for Kostos and in a move that is uncharacteristic of her, she abandons caution and tells him how she feels. She is rewarded by learning that he still loves her, and that he really came to the U.S. to see her rather than the excuse he had previously given her.

Bridget's reunion with her grandmother takes another step when Greta asks her to move into the attic room she has spent the past few weeks renovating. Although she has still not revealed her identity to Greta, they are slowly becoming a family and are now living under the same roof, and Bridget is beginning to see qualities in Greta that she ignored previously because of her outward appearance.



Pages 262 - 304

Pages 262 - 304 Summary

Before they return to South Carolina, Carmen's father and stepmother take the entire family to dinner, including Krista, Paul, Carmen and Christina. Carmen thinks the evening will be a disaster, but it is surprisingly comfortable and she realizes that this collection of people is her family. She also realizes that her father is happy with his new wife and her mother deserves a new beginning too. She confesses to her mother that she rewound the tape and accidentally erased David's message. She says she didn't want things to change between them, but her mother reassures her that it would never happen.

Kostos arrives for a surprise visit. He and Lena go into Washington to look at the national monuments, then they go to a nearby clearing where they stop just short of making love. Lena tells Tibby that she thinks it will happen soon.

Tibby calls Brian and leaves an apologetic message on his answering machine, also inviting him to the screening of her film.

Billy sees Bridget kicking her soccer ball around and they play. She defeats him soundly, and he says she reminds him of a girl he knew years ago, but Bridget still does not identify herself. Bridget is feeling and looking more like herself, as she's lost weight from running and her hair is returning to its normal blonde color. Back at home, she sees Greta sleeping and thinks how small and sad her life is, especially compared to Bridget's mother's vivacious personality.

Lena can hardly wait to see Kostos the following weekend, but he calls to say he might have to go back to Greece instead. He is vague and offers no explanation.

Bridget talks to Greta about her grandchildren. Greta says they used to visit often, but that stopped as Marly's mental health deteriorated and Bridget's father disagreed with Greta about the seriousness of Marly's condition. Bridget goes through the last of her mother's boxes, finding some photos showing how ill her mother was near the end of her life. When a storm shuts down the power, Greta has difficulty giving herself an insulin injection so Bridget holds a flashlight to help her see better. As she watches the needle go into her grandmother's arm, Bridget flashes back to seeing her mother lying dead on the floor with a needle in her arm, and she runs out into the storm. When she returns the following morning, she realizes that Greta has known who she was all along. She also lets Billy know that she is not Gilda, but his childhood friend Bridget.

Brian returns to visit Tibby and they reconnect. She proudly introduces him to her friends.



Kostos returns to Greece and in a series of short, terse letters, he tells Lena that although he still loves her, he cannot stay committed to her and she should not feel committed to him. Lena feels that the bottom has fallen out of her world.

Pages 262 - 304 Analysis

Her parents divorce has had a deep and lasting effect on Carmen. In addition to missing her father terribly since he moved to South Carolina, she resents anyone who intrudes on her relationship with both her mother and her father, including not only David, but also Lydia, Krista and Paul. During the dinner, however, she is surprised to see that her mother and stepmother can get along and that her parents can continue to enjoy their memories of happier times together. For the first time, she begins to see that she actually has an entire family, rather than just her mother and herself as she has always felt. Seeing that her father is happy in his new relationship, yet still happy to be part of his first family, Carmen finally comes to terms with the fact that her mother deserves to be equally happy. Her confession about erasing the tape leads to an open discussion with her mother in which Christina admits that she got carried away with her new romance and behaved somewhat immaturely, and she gives Carmen the reassurance she needs that no one will ever come between them.

Lena has finally let go of her fears and is finding great happiness with Kostos, even to the extent that she is seriously considering having sex with him. However, her greatest fears start to resurface when Kostos suddenly pulls back, telling her that he can't visit her the following weekend and might have to return to Greece. Lena has a vivid imagination, but she primarily imagines how things can and will go wrong, so Kostos does the worst thing he can do by keeping her in the dark to envision the worst possible scenario. Even when he breaks off their relationship, he hurts her even more by not revealing the reason for his actions and leaving her wondering what she could have done wrong.

As Bridget reveals more of her true self — not just her physical appearance, but the soccer skills that are so much a part of her — she becomes increasingly recognizable to Billy, but she is not quite ready to reveal her true identity. Then as she is continuing to learn more about her mother's mental illness and see photographic evidence of her gradual decline, watching her grandmother give herself an injection causes her to vividly recall finding her mother after her suicide. The parallel between the needle in Greta's arm and the one in Marly's arm symbolizes the fact that Greta has become a mother figure to Bridget, but in a far more positive way than the mother she grew up with.



Pages 305 - 351

Pages 305 - 351 Summary

Carmen calls David, apologizes, and asks him to take her mother out. Her mother is surprised, but agrees to the date, although she is determined not to move too fast this time. Carmen offers to let her mother wear the pants, but Christina refuses, saying she appreciates the gesture but she must be a grown-up this time.

Bridget receives the pants and is thrilled that they now fit. She finds a photo of Greta as a teenager and realizes that they look alike, and she and Greta talk about the ways in which Bridget is like her mother and the ways she is not. At Billy's team's final soccer game, there are not enough players, so Bridget comes in as a substitute, wearing the pants, and she helps them win. She leaves Alabama to return home, but promises to return for Christmas and bring Perry.

The day of Tibby's screening arrives and many people are there — her parents, Brian, Lena, Carmen, Vanessa, and Bailey's parents. Tibby realizes that these are all people she's hurt or disappointed, but they are supporting her and giving her a second chance. Everyone is emotional after the film is shown, and even Alex congratulates Tibby.

Word arrives that Lena's grandfather has had a stroke and dies, and the family leaves for Greece before Lena can locate the pants. After the funeral, Lena sees Kostos and is devastated to learn that he got a girl pregnant and has married her.

Preparing to return home, Tibby packs everything from her dorm room, including a photo of Bailey. It is painful for her to see, but Tibby vows to keep it on display in her room as a reminder that Bailey knew what was real and the picture will keep Tibby from hiding from reality. Back at home, Tibby's mother reveals that she received a note of apology from Lena's mother and she shows Tibby a photo that was included in the note. Tibby is thrilled and asks if she can keep it.

Back in Greece, Ari tells Lena about Eugene. They met and fell in love, then she followed him from Greece to the United States. They lived together and planned to marry, but he had to return to Greece and never came back for her, marrying someone else instead. She met and married Lena's father, but when Lena was a year old, Eugene returned and wanted Ari back. She was tempted, but realized she loved Lena's father so she stayed with him. As Lena is sitting outdoors painting, Kostos comes by and they say their final goodbyes.

Pages 305 - 351 Analysis

Carmen takes the final step in accepting her mother's relationship with David and the changes it brings to her mother and their relationship. Offering to let Christina wear the pants is not only a form of apology, but a symbol of the fact that she is willing to see her



mother in a different light, as an individual much like herself rather than simply the mother who has always taken care of her. Christina also shows a new maturity by realizing that she isn't a teenager and must forge a grown-up relationship with David rather than simply expecting flowers and romance.

Bridget's summer of transformation is complete when she sees the photo of her grandmother at about her age and realizes how much they have in common. She learns that although her real mother is gone and her relationship with her father and brother has diminished considerably, she has a family with Greta and can perhaps rebuild her other relationships to some extent. The fact that the pants now fit symbolizes Bridget's reconnection with her authentic self after being lost for such a long time, and that gives her the courage to reveal her true identity to Billy and to return to the soccer field as a player rather than an observer.

The screening of Tibby's film also helps her return to her authentic self by bringing closure to her relationship with Bailey and bringing together all the people who are important in her life. During the course of a few weeks, she has caused great hurt to her mother and Brian, but she receives redemption when they come to her screening and demonstrate that all is forgiven.

Just as her friends' lives are coming together, Lena's life falls apart when she learns that Kostos, whose gentlemanly qualities she has admired, has done the right thing and married the girl he got pregnant. However, the situation finally gives her the opportunity to learn about her mother's relationship with Eugene and see the striking parallels to her own life. She also gains insight into her own personality and fears when she learns that her earliest years came during a time when her mother was in turmoil, while her sister's early childhood came during happy times, revealing traits that are evident in both of their personalities.



Pages 352 - 373

Pages 352 - 373 Summary

Billy walks Bridget to the bus station and kisses her. Bridget thinks that she has always thought of her younger self and her current self as two different people, but she finally is beginning to feel the connection between them.

Carmen calls Porter and arranges to meet for dinner, but she ends up bringing Paul and Lena along too. Carmen senses an instant connection between Paul and Lena, and at first she struggles with the idea that a relationship between them would change things for her, but she decides to embrace it, so she takes Lena into the restroom and switches clothes with her, giving Lena the traveling pants. Later, Porter calls and breaks things off with Carmen, causing her to realize she's never really seen him as a person.

The four friends gather in Lena's bedroom to catch up. When they get hungry, they go to the kitchen and are thrilled to find their mothers sitting around the table, renewing their faded friendship.

At Gilda's Aerobics Studio, they conduct their annual ceremony to retire the pants until the next summer. Tibby steals a bottle of champagne from her parents' house and they drink to their dead, to love, and to their mothers. Tibby shows them the photo Ari sent to Alice. It is the four mothers sitting on a brick wall, looking happy, and all are wearing jeans.

Pages 352 - 373 Analysis

Throughout the book, Carmen has been the slowest of the girls to embrace growth and change, but she is the only one who is continuing to actively grow in the final chapters. When she sees the immediate attraction between Lena and Paul, her first reaction is to find a way to put an end to any potential relationship before it can even start because she fears it would affect her friendships with both Lena and Paul. However, she has learned from the experience of watching her parents move forward with new relationships and seeing that their happiness does not diminish her in any way, so she makes a conscious decision to help them by giving Lena the pants rather than hurting them by thinking only of her own selfish needs. Although she has gone through painful experiences, she now sees that a relationship between two people about whom she cares deeply is a good thing for everyone.

The last chapter brings the story full circle as the girls gather at Gilda's to put the pants away for another year. There is a brief review of the people and experiences that have shaped the summer as the girls toast their dead — Marly, Bailey, Lena's grandfather and even Kostos because although he is not actually dead, he is someone Lena needs to mourn. When they drink to love, Tibby's stubborn side comes out when she refuses to include Brian on their list.



The book's final scene goes back to the beginning of their friendship as Tibby brings out the photo of their mothers. A strong parallel is drawn between the mothers and daughters in terms of their physical descriptions, their happiness together and the significance Tibby attributes to the fact that all four are wearing jeans.



Characters

Lena Kaligaris

Lena Kaligaris is a 17-year-old girl of Greek heritage. She is serious, thoughtful, and a loyal friend, but is plagued by vague fears that keep her from taking risks. She is still haunted by the memory of Kostos, a handsome boy she fell in love with the previous summer while visiting her grandparents in Greece, although she broke off the relationship because she was too conflicted by her feelings for him. When he shows up on her doorstep, at first she is too paralyzed to even speak to him, but eventually faces her fears and they begin seeing each other again. Her feelings for Kostos make Lena very curious about Eugene, a Greek boy with whom her mother had a heartbreaking relationship early in her life. Eventually, Kostos breaks her heart in much the same way Eugene broke her mother's heart many years ago, and Lena must learn to do something that is very difficult for her. She must allow herself to fall into despair and know that her friends will be there to catch her.

Carmen Lowell

Carmen Lowell is a 17-year-old girl of Hispanic heritage whose parents have been divorced for several years. She lives with her mother, with whom she has a very close relationship until her mother begins dating again. Carmen has an explosive personality and wears her feelings on her sleeve, so her anger and jealousy over her mother's new relationship become all-consuming, eventually leading her to destroy the romance and damage her relationship with her mother. These feelings are not new to Carmen, who reacted similarly the previous summer when she learned that her father was getting remarried. The stepbrother and stepsister she initially resented help her begin to learn that her feelings about her mother's romance are misplaced and that she actually has a family, although a non-traditional one. Carmen's self-destructive tendencies also cause her to alienate a boy who had a crush on her even as she claims to be looking for love. Growth is painful for Carmen, who clearly is aware of her anger issues and tendency to lash out at others, but is powerless to stop herself.

Bridget Vreeland

Bridget Vreeland, age 17, lost her mother at an early age and now lives with her distant, detached father and her equally-detached twin brother, Perry. Formerly outgoing and vivacious, she has changed completely since the previous summer, when she had a sexual relationship that turned into heartbreak. Since then, she has dyed her blonde hair a darker color, gained weight, and given up soccer, which used to be her great passion. She has remained close to her friends, but they worry about her because she seems completely lost until she goes to Alabama to reconnect with her estranged grandmother and her family's history.



Tibby Tomko-Rollins

Tabitha "Tibby" Tomko-Rollins is a 17-year-old girl who lives in Bethesda, Maryland with her parents and younger siblings. Tibby was an only child until three or four years ago, when her parents had two more children, and Tibby now believes they love her siblings more than they love her. A year ago, while her best friends were out of town for the summer, Tibby met two new friends who have become influential in her life — Brian, a geeky, good-hearted boy who has a crush on her, and Bailey, a 12-year-old girl who died of leukemia at the end of the previous summer. Tibby loves pop culture, particularly filmmaking, and she spends her 17th summer taking a film course and living on a college campus, where she learns some important lessons about what is really important in her life.

Ari Kaligaris

Ari Kaligaris is Lena's mother. She is a native of Greece and helps Lena accept her heartbreak by telling her a similar story from her own life.

Alice Tomko-Rollins

Alice Tomko-Rollins is Tibby's mother and the mother of her two younger siblings, whom Tibby thinks she prefers.

Christina Lowell

Christina Lowell is Carmen's mother. She has not dated since her divorce from Carmen's father until this summer, when she falls in love with a new man.

Greta Randolph

Greta Randolph is Bridget's grandmother and the mother of Bridget's late mother, Marly.

Kostos

Kostos is a young Greek man with whom Lena fell in love the previous summer while visiting her grandparents in Greece.

Alex and Maura

Alex and Maura are fellow students in Tibby's film course with whom she strives to become friends.



David

David is an attorney in the firm where Carmen's mother works and who begins dating Christina.

Brian

Brian is a friend of Tibby's. He is a good-hearted nerd who is a video game master and has a crush on Tibby.

Krista and Paul

Krista and Paul are Carmen's stepsister and stepbrother.

Billy Kline

Billy Kline is a childhood friend of Bridget's with whom she reconnects while spending the summer in Alabama.

Effie

Effie is Lena's younger sister.

Nicky and Katherine

Nicky and Katherine are Tibby's younger brother and sister.

Vanessa

Vanessa is the resident assistant in Tibby's dorm and a talented artist.

Porter

Porter is a boy who has a crush on Carmen and tries to date her.



Objects/Places

Burgess, Alabama

Burgess is a small town in Alabama where Bridget's grandmother lives and where she goes to learn more about her family's history and reconnect with herself.

Bethesda, Maryland

Bethesda, Maryland is a suburb of Washington, D.C. and the city where the four main characters live.

Gilda's Aerobics Studio

Gilda's is the aerobics studio where the girls' mothers met in a pregnancy aerobics class. The main characters break in to the studio each year to initiate the traveling pants for the summer and again to retire them until the next year.

Williamston College

Williamston College is the site of the summer film program attended by Tibby.

Basia's Boutique

Basia's is a clothing shop where Lena gets a summer job.

Traveling Pants

The Traveling Pants are a pair of jeans that fit all four of the main characters perfectly even though they are of very different shapes and sizes. The girls believe that the pants have magical powers, and they share the pants equally during the summer.

Santorini, Italy

Santorini is an island off the Italian coast where Lena's grandparents and Kostos live.



Bridget's soccer ball

When Bridget buys a new soccer ball, it becomes a significant object because it symbolizes the fact that she is gradually reconnecting with her love of the game she had previously abandoned.

Lena's letters

The letters written between Lena and Kostos reveal much about the course of their relationship over the past year.

Vanessa's stuffed animals

Vanessa's creativity and artistic talent is revealed through the colorful stuffed animals that fill her dorm room.



Themes

Coming of Age

The *Second Summer of the Sisterhood* is first and foremost a coming-of-age novel because it revolves around four teenage girls who experience significant growth during the course of one summer.

When the summer begins, Lena is unsure of her feelings for Kostos, the young man she met in Greece the previous year. Although she cared deeply about him, she cut off contact with him several months earlier, largely because she felt unable to handle her feelings for him, but their romance is rekindled when he arrives in her hometown for a visit. Her renewed relationship with Kostos prompts Lena to grow in several ways. She finally forces herself to admit her true feelings for him and tell him that she loves him, and when she learns that he has married the Greek girl he got pregnant, she learns that it is OK to give in to her grief because she has close friends on whom she can lean. The experience with Kostos also causes her relationship with her mother to grow and mature through Ari's sharing of a similar experience from her own past.

Tibby begins the summer feeling petty toward her parents because she thinks they prefer her younger siblings, and resentful toward her younger brother and sister. When she arrives at film school, she immediately seeks the friendship of two fellow students she thinks are cool and sophisticated, but in time learns that they are, in fact, shallow compared to her nerdy friend Brian. She grows further by learning to trust her instincts regarding the best topic for her film, bravely facing her grief over Bailey's death and learning from their relationship, and realizing that her parents love her no less than her siblings and will be there for her even when she hurts them.

Bridget's growth comes through learning more about her family's history and rebuilding a relationship with her grandmother. When they first meet, Bridget lies about who she is, not realizing that her grandmother would surely recognize her. During the next few weeks, she comes to terms with painful pieces of her past, including her mother's mental illness and suicide and her father's subsequent retreating into himself. By the end of the summer, she has learned to reconnect not only with her family, but with the parts of herself she had lost over the previous year.

Of the four main characters, Carmen displays the greatest level of immaturity when the book begins. Although she claims to be looking for love herself, she is childishly resentful when her mother begins dating and she responds by behaving badly toward Christina and eventually bringing an end to the relationship. As time goes on, however, she realizes that her resentment is misplaced and that her mother deserves the same second chance for happiness that her father has gotten. She shows further growth at the close of the novel when she considers sabotaging the budding relationship between Lena and Paul, but realizes that a romance would not diminish her own relationships with either of them.



Enduring Friendship

Enduring Friendship is one of the primary themes of *The Second Summer of the Sisterhood*. The novel follows the lives of four teenage girls who have been close friends literally all of their lives, as their mothers met while they were pregnant with them. Their friendship is symbolized by the pair of jeans they all share and that they ship to the girl with the greatest current need even when it breaks the agreed-upon rotation.

The girls have been so close for so long that they can anticipate each other's every move, feeling and reaction. During the course of the summer, even though all except Lena and Carmen are separated, they stay in constant contact through letters, e-mails and phone calls. When one is in trouble, the others automatically rally around her, and they are free to disagree with each other without fear of damaging their friendship.

While the friendship among the four main characters is the central one, the relationship among their mothers is also important. The reader learns that the other three women drifted apart after Marly's death, and they have a serious quarrel during the course of the novel, but in the end, their daughters' relationship and the experiences they've gone through cause them to remember the love they've shared and rekindle their own friendship. In addition, Tibby's relationship with Brian demonstrates the importance of staying true to one's real friends and she also learns that her friendship with Bailey continues to be an influence even after Bailey's death.

Acceptance

Acceptance is a growth lesson each of the four main characters must learn over the course of their 17th summer. When the book begins, each girl is in denial about something — and in some cases, a number of things in her life. Tibby has spent the past year carefully avoiding facing her grief about her friend Bailey's death. When she is assigned to make a biographical film, her first instinct is to focus on Bailey, but she thinks the topic will be too painful. By the end of the summer, Tibby learns to accept Bailey's death and her grief over that loss, and to look back with fondness on their relationship and its continued influence on her life. In addition, Tibby finds that being accepted by her class' "cool kids" isn't what she thought it would be and develops a new definition of friendship.

Carmen refuses to accept the fact that her mother has begun to date again, but in time comes to realize that her mother deserves to build a new relationship, just as her father has done. By accepting David and his role in her mother's life, she also comes to terms with her tendency toward anger and resentment, and she uses the lesson to avoid sabotaging a budding relationship between Lena and Paul, accepting the fact that their relationship will not have an adverse affect on her.

Bridget learns a lesson in acceptance when she comes to terms with her mother's mental illness and suicide, and the changes that she allowed to happen to her own



personality and well-being after an ill-fated sexual relationship. Finally, Lena first learns to accept her feelings for Kostos, and then the end of their relationship. She also accepts help and support from her friends, which she has always provided for them but avoided accepting for herself.

Style

Point of View

The *Second Summer of the Sisterhood* is written from the perspective of a third-person narrator. The narrator is omniscient, providing the reader with not only factual information, but also the inner thoughts and feelings of the various characters. The book contains an appropriate balance of descriptive exposition and dialogue, and is also sprinkled here and there with portions of letters, notes, e-mails and instant messages that are exchanged between various characters. The book focuses entirely on Lena, Carmen, Bridget and Tibby, giving little or no insights into the thoughts of the novel's other characters.

The exception is the book's brief prologue, which is narrated by Lena. This portion of the novel serves as an introduction to the story, providing a short history of the relationship among the four main characters and a description of the traveling pants and their importance in the girls' lives.

Setting

The novel is set in several locations as it follows the activities of each of the four main characters. The first few chapters take place in the girls' hometown of Bethesda, Maryland, and the subsequent portions of the book that focus on Lena and Carmen continue to be set in there. Specific locations include their homes, the boutique where Lena works, the home of the family for whom Carmen babysits and a few public places such as restaurants.

Early in the novel, Bridget goes to Burgess, Alabama, where her grandmother lives, so most of the portions involving this character take place there, including her grandmother's home and a nearby soccer field. Much of Tibby's story takes place at Williamston College, where she attends film school for the summer, although she travels back to Bethesda several times during the course of the plot.

The book's final chapters take place back in Bethesda as Tibby and Bridget return home at the end of the summer.

Language and Meaning

The language of *The Second Summer of the Sisterhood* is casual and friendly. The book's target audience is teenage girls, so the language is appropriate for that age group, incorporating an appropriate number of challenging words and terms that encourage young readers to stretch their vocabularies.



The author uses language to effectively flesh out the personalities of the book's various characters. For example, Carmen is outgoing and somewhat explosive while Lena is quiet and sweet, and their dialogue is written in a way that is appropriate for each of them. After Bridget has spent several weeks in Alabama, her word choices begin to reflect the Southern accents of the people with whom she is in contact on a regular basis, and the dialogue for Kostos is appropriate for someone whose native language is not English, although he is fluent in it.

Structure

The book opens with a prologue that is narrated by Lena, and the remainder is divided into unnumbered chapters of varying lengths. Each chapter begins with a quotation, often from a literary figure, that relates to or foreshadows events that will occur in that section.

Since most of the four main characters are geographically separated during the course of the plot, the novel switches back and forth among them, allowing the reader to follow each of their experiences equally. Each chapter includes sections on at least two of the girls, and most include at least a small portion on each of them.

The plot is simple and straightforward, following the activities of each of the four main characters in turn. During most of the book, the girls' experiences are dealt with individually, but they are together at the beginning and the ending, and they have a number of interactions at other times during the story. Even when they are apart, the thread of their friendship is a constant theme as they refer to each other and their history throughout the book.

The story takes place over the course of one summer and it moves quickly. The author maintains the book's momentum and holds the reader's interest by switching frequently among the main characters, giving approximately equal attention to each one.



Quotes

"The word friends doesn't seem to stretch big enough to describe how we feel about each other. We forget where one of us starts and the other one stops" (p. 4).

"Fine, blood was thicker than water. But friendship, it struck Tibby, was thicker than both" (p. 26).

"Lena knew she had spent too much of her life in a state of passive dread, just waiting for something bad to happen. In a life like that, relief was as close as you got to happiness. Lena wondered about her dread. Where had it come from? What did she fear? Nothing terrible had happened to her. Was it a case of past lives? Otherwise, she hadn't lived long enough to explain it" (p. 99).

"She wondered. Had she not brought Brian because she was worried about how he would seem to Alex and Maura? Or was it because she worried about how she, Tibby, would seem to Brian" (p. 105).

"Tibby bit savagely on the inside of her cheek. What kind of friend was she, that she didn't even know this single most important thing? She knew Brian had had a lonely, sad life so far. She knew it, and yet she'd never bothered to find out why. She'd avoided it like she avoided so many things" (p. 116).

"If she had been her old self, he would have known she was flirting with him and he would very possibly have asked her out by now. As it was, he didn't" (p. 119).

"Five minutes later, both boys were crawling happily around the floor, one car apiece. Carmen sat on the couch and watched the boys play, wondering if maybe that lesson she'd missed had actually contained something valuable" (p. 133).

"Her mind flashed to the Traveling Pants. Just this morning she'd sent them on their way. She hadn't even worn them. She felt angry at herself, and it made her run faster and farther. And the longer she ran, the more she felt like she was carrying a burden and she wanted it off" (p. 134).

"I can't tell you how I did with the Pants. I can't talk about it. You have to wait till the end of the summer and then I'll have some big things to say. I just know I will" (p.140).

"There was nobody there. Even though that should have made Carmen happy, it made her sad" (p. 151).

"Bridget considered the deep fraudulence of sitting there listening to her grandmother talk about her. But she suddenly wanted to know this. It felt good" (p. 160-161).

"On her way down the hall, Tibby felt a hollowness under her ribs as she rewound all the snide comments and jokes Maura had made about Vanessa's toys. Maura, the creative



artist, who couldn't even finish her script, while Vanessa, the dud, had created a world out of fabric. And Maura was the one Tibby had striven to have as a friend" (p. 164).

"A few minutes later she heard her mother let herself in. Christina went right for the message machine and hit the Play button. Bruce Brattle's message played. Only that one. Carmen felt her heart pounding a little. She could have corrected the mistake by telling her mom. Instead, she fell asleep. A little while later, in a dismally unmysterious nap dream, their apartment sizzled and flamed. David valiantly saved Christina as Carmen burned to a crisp" (p. 168).

"It struck her that Maura was a yeah-girl. Pink glasses or no, she was a follower, an inconsequential person, and Tibby felt herself acting just like her" (p. 171).

"Tragedy brought some families together, maybe, but not hers. Her father never talked about what had happened. He never talked about the things that might lead to talking about what had happened. There were so many things they couldn't talk about, they had stopped trying to talk about much of anything" (p. 187).

"It was sad. She knew it was. She wondered if maybe she could have held on to them better, Perry and her dad. Maybe if she'd tried hard enough she could have kept them feeling like a family and kept her home feeling like a home. Instead, they seemed to float out from under the roof, off into the stratosphere, farther and farther apart, orbiting nothing" (p. 187-188).

"The Traveling Pants were sitting on her desk chair, waiting patiently. Did they know about this? Had they seen this coming? Lena eyed them suspiciously before she pulled them on. What exactly were those Pants up to? Were they going to make her miserable before they made her happy? Oh, please, no" (p. 189).

"How had Tibby let herself get so far away? Where had she been? Her whole life since Bailey had died now seemed to her like the distant wanderings of an amnesiac, full of confusion and forgetting" (p. 198).

"Before Tibby's wondering eyes, her mother instinctively put her hands on Tibby's sad face. Alice's eyes were full of worry that Tibby wasn't where she was supposed to be. Alice remembered that she loved Tibby before she remembered how mad she was at her" (p. 199).

"She had quit soccer back in November because she hadn't wanted people counting on her anymore. She'd just wanted to sleep" (p. 203).

"She knew what Bailey would think of Alex. If she tried, she could see through Bailey's eyes, and it was like holding a mirror up to the world. Bailey would know Alex was a poser and she wouldn't think about him at all. There were too many other genuine characters out there, people Bailey would want to think about" (p. 214).

"He was a fake risk-taker, a phony rebel. It took one to know one" (p. 225).



"I wish I hadn't broken off our letters," she said. "I did it because I was afraid of missing you and wanting you all the time. I felt so stretched out. I wanted to feel like my life belonged just to me again" (p. 238).

"Tibby let the feelings wash over her. She could sit here and cry for as long as she liked. She could crawl under the desk. She could run around in the parking lot. She could live big. She could make herself to do things that were hard. She could. For once, Tibby was right smack in the middle, and she could see a lot better from here" (p. 249).

"Carmen had meant to say that she didn't want her mom to be happy without Carmen getting to be happy too. But as Paul's words bumped around in her brain, she wondered if maybe he'd understood something she hadn't. Had she been jealous of her mother? Or had she been jealous of David" (p. 254).

Carmen felt flushed and warm with pleasure as she looked around at the animated faces. This was her family, weird as it was. She'd gone from a dysfunctional three to a completely haywire six.

Page 265

"Usually when she slept twelve hours at night it meant she was falling apart, but these nights, with her quiet dreams, she felt as if she were remaking herself, putting herself together" (p. 296).

"This woman's need was raw. Suddenly Lena knew who she was. She was Mrs. Graffman. She was Bailey's mother. Mrs. Graffman didn't know Lena, but Lena knew about her. She had lost her daughter, her only child. She didn't have anyone to be a mother to anymore. Lena knew nothing about loss compared to her" (p. 309).

"After a while Lena realized she wasn't at the bottom of the well, but here, with Carmen" (p. 313).

"Maybe Bridget didn't have much of a home with her dad and Perry. But she had made herself a home here" (p. 347).

"In a flash of wonderment she saw firm, continuous ground under her feet, stretching from back then to right now and on and on as far as her eyes could take her" (p. 354).

"Carmen could ignore what she was seeing. She could feel threatened and try to stomp on it before it could dig roots. Or maybe she could figure that Lena and Paul were two of the people she loved best on the planet, and they each deserved the love of someone as worthy as the other" (p. 362).

"She leaned into Bee, allowing Bee to support her weight. What a strange reversal it was to collapse and let Bee catch her. But then, she hadn't just learned to love this summer — she had also learned how to need" (p. 368).



Topics for Discussion

What is the significance of the quotations that begin each chapter? Choose three chapters and explain how the quotation relates to the events that occur in the accompanying chapter.

Why does Bridget impulsively decide to pose as Gilda when she arrives at her grandmother's house? How does pretending to be someone else affect the relationships she forms in Alabama? How is her decision to hide her real identity symbolic of the struggles she has been experiencing in the past year?

At one point in the novel, Carmen's mother wears the traveling pants on a date, and when the pants first arrive in Alabama, Bridget is unable to wear them because she has gained too much weight. How do these events affect Carmen and Bridget? How do their reactions relate to their feelings about the magic they believe the pants hold?

What is Bridget looking for when she goes to Alabama? What does she expect to get from Greta? Does she get what she hoped for, and how does the experience change her?

Compare and contrast Brian and Alex. How does Tibby view each of them in the beginning? How does her view of them change as the book progresses? Do you think she returns Brian's romantic feelings for her?

How does Kristy's visit affect Carmen's story? How does Carmen feel when she realizes that Kristy is trying to model herself after Carmen? How do Kristy and Paul begin to change Carmen's view of family?

Discuss the ups and downs of Lena's relationships with Kostos. Why do you think she has so much trouble coming to terms with her feelings for him? How is she affected when he returns to Greece without giving her an adequate explanation? Why is his handling of the situation worse for her than if he had simply told her the truth?