

"Infused with bone-chilling terror and staggering empathy."

—RACHEL HARRISON, author of *Such Sharp Teeth*



GRAVEYARD
OF
LOST
CHILDREN

A NOVEL

KATRINA
MONROE

READING GROUP GUIDE

1. As the daughter of someone who exhibited signs of mental health problems, Olivia is the kind of woman who monitors herself for symptoms. Why do you think that, at the onset of what she believes to be hallucinations, Olivia decides not to seek help?
2. *Olivia did not glow*. Society often shames women who either do not choose motherhood or do not define themselves by their role as mothers. Do you think this societal shame contributed to Olivia's actions? How?
3. Would the story have unfolded differently if Olivia had sought mental health care? Or would the black-haired woman have remained a part of her life?
4. Throughout the story, Olivia laments the loss of the woman she was before she became pregnant. Does this contribute to her experiences with the black-haired woman? Why?
5. Olivia's grandmother insinuates that the black-haired woman visits all mothers, but neither she nor Olivia can determine why their experiences with the black-haired woman are more intense than what others may have experienced. Why do you think their family's visions of the black-haired woman are more visceral?
6. Shannon's point of view is presented through journal entries, later found by Olivia. Does the fact of Shannon's manipulation change the way you think about events as Shannon portrayed them?

7. If Olivia had never found Shannon's journal, would she have sought Shannon out as vehemently? What, if any, effect did the content of the journal have on Olivia's state of mind?
8. When Aunt Erin suspects Olivia might be struggling in the way Shannon had after giving birth, she warns Olivia against seeking treatment. Why do you think that is?
9. Olivia and her grandmother appear to be the only two women to see the black-haired woman and come out the other side of the experience without having succumbed to the darkness. What traits do they share that may have helped them overcome it?
10. Folklore tells us that names have power. When Shannon named the black-haired woman "Jo," do you think she gave her the power that would ultimately lead to Shannon's possession?
11. How might the story have changed if Angela had told Olivia about her own mother's experiences with the black-haired woman? Would Olivia have been more willing to speak to her? Or less?
12. At the end of the book, Olivia and Kris appear to be mending the rift in their marriage, caused by Olivia's struggles and Kris's lack of understanding. What do you think would happen if they had another child? Would history repeat itself? Would their marriage survive it?
13. Though Flora is beginning kindergarten in the final chapter, the black-haired woman still appears to Olivia despite Olivia getting treatment. This time, though, Olivia seems to have more control over her. What does this mean, if anything, about the evolution of the black-haired woman and what she represents?