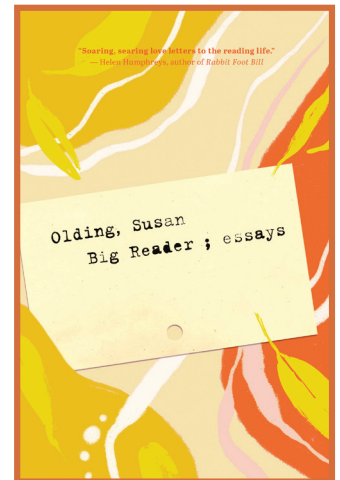


Big Reader

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Discussion Guide for Book Groups

1. Have you—like Anna Karenina and Olding—ever done something so “out of character” for yourself that it caused you to question who you really are?
2. Are there books whose themes have seemed to run through your life, or to which you’ve returned again and again for solace or inspiration? Which books? Why these books?
3. Have you ever re-read a book and seen it differently the second (or third or fifth) time?
4. If you were a “big reader” in childhood, why was that? What did you get from it? What turned you toward books?
5. If you learned to read before the Internet age, has your relationship to reading changed since then? And if you’re a digital native, do you prefer to read online or on screen or from paper books? Why?
6. Have you ever visited a writer’s house? Which one? What was it like?
7. One of the themes running through this collection is the way that literary classics tend to constrain women’s lives by presenting those lives as constrained. At the same time, for many women, reading (and often writing) offered a path to greater knowledge, self-determination, and political commitment. Can you trace these patterns in your own life or the lives of family members and friends?
8. Anna Karenina or Anna Wulf?
9. These essays play with structure in a variety of ways. One is presented in “panels”; several are braided narratives; and there’s a separate narrative running between and through all the longer essays, as well. What do you think about the structure of individual essays and the book as a whole?



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