

The Book of CarolSue

By Lynne Hugo

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Summary / Bio:

Brimming with wit and warmth, award-winning author Lynne Hugo’s life-affirming new novel balances hardship and humor in a story about how a family gets on...and goes on.

CarolSue and her sister, Louisa, have always been best friends, though they haven’t had much in common since CarolSue married Charlie, moved to Atlanta, and swapped shoes covered with Indiana farm dust for pedicures and afternoon bridge. But when her husband dies in front of the TV while eating blueberry pie in his favorite recliner, CarolSue is left adrift and Louisa, the ever-officious retired schoolteacher, swoops in with a plan. It starts with moving CarolSue into the farmhouse she shares with a bunch of talkative chickens, a goat, puppy, and cantankerous cat.

It doesn’t take long for CarolSue to remember she’s not cut out for canning vegetables and feeding chickens. She resolves to ditch county life and go back to Atlanta... until Louisa’s son, Reverend Gary, arrives with an abandoned infant and a dubious story. He begs the women to look after the baby while he locates the mother—a young immigrant who fears deportation.

Keeping his own secrets, Gary enlists the aid of the sheriff, Gus, in the search. But CarolSue’s bond with the baby is undeniable, and she forms an unconventional secret plan of her own...

“Hugo deftly combines whimsy and longing, old grief and newfound joy. With her unique and compassionate voice, she writes about loss and redemption in a way that makes you laugh out loud one minute, tear up the next... you’re sure to experience tender feelings for her engaging cast of unforgettable characters.” - Diane Chamberlain, New York Times bestselling author

Lynne Hugo is the author of ten novels, including *The Testament of Harold’s Wife*. She loves hearing from readers and is available for virtual book club visits. Please visit LynneHugo.com for more information.

Discussion Questions:

1. If you have a sibling, did you have roles in your family? For example, in some families there’s the smart one, the social one, the athletic one, etc. How do you see CarolSue and Louisa acting in - or sometimes breaking out of - the roles they have played in their family? Have you or a family member ever defied your own designated roles?
2. How did you react to Gary’s relationship to Rosalina? Did you feel he took advantage of her? Did she take advantage of him?

3. People grieve in many ways. How would you compare and contrast CarolSue's grieving with Louisa's? If you have had or been close to a major grief experience, did either woman remind you of that? If you've not lost someone very close, do you imagine yourself reacting in one way or the other, or very differently?
4. What is your image of a woman in her late sixties or early seventies? In what ways does Louisa challenge or confirm that? What about CarolSue?
5. What do you see as the role of animals in *The Book of CarolSue*?
6. If you've read *The Testament of Harold's Wife*, how do you compare the two novels? A third book may be coming to complete a trilogy, although none will require that you have read the others. What characters from either of the first two, other than Louisa and CarolSue would you most like to see again? Why?
7. What do you imagine as the best futures for these characters? Was the ending satisfying? What do you think will happen to Rosalina? How about Gus and Louisa? Where do you see CarolSue fitting in?