

A woman in a red dress with gold buttons and a red sash is shown from the chest down, holding a white rose. The background is a warm, golden light. The title 'A SOUND AMONG the TREES' is written in a mix of serif and script fonts. The word 'A' is in a large, elegant script, 'SOUND' is in a bold serif, 'AMONG' is in a smaller serif, 'the' is in a small script, and 'TREES' is in a large, bold serif. The background features a large, faint image of a woman in a red dress holding a white rose, and a smaller image of a two-story house with a porch and a brick path leading to it.

A SOUND
AMONG *the* TREES

A NOVEL

SUSAN
MEISSNER

Author of *The Shape of Mercy* and *Lady in Waiting*

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Apart from well-known real people and real events associated with the Civil War, the characters and events in this book are fictional and any resemblance to actual persons or events is coincidental.

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READERS GUIDE

1. Describe Adelaide. What is her greatest strength? her greatest weakness? What is her relationship with Holly Oak, and how has it colored her entire life?
2. Holly Oak withstood the Civil War but not unscathed. Along with the cannonball embedded in its walls, it acquired a reputation. What do people like Pearl think of the house? How does Adelaide think of the house? What about Susannah? Which is true? Do you think a home can take on any of the characteristics assigned to Holly Oak, or is it simply a building?
3. Why does Marielle agree to live in the same house her new husband shared with his previous wife? Do you think she was right? What would you have done in her situation, coming into a family as a stepmother far from the only home you'd ever known?
4. Susannah is referred to as a spy, a traitor, and a ghost. Who was she really? How does knowing the truth about Susannah's life free Adelaide? How does it free Marielle? Caroline?
5. Why does Caroline come back to Holly Oak? What do you think would have happened to Adelaide and Marielle if she had not?
6. Eldora claims to be in contact with the spirit world. Do you believe her? What did she feel in Holly Oak? What happens when she meets Caroline?
7. When she is interviewed by the journalist, Adelaide says, "People will think what they want. They will always think what they want." How is this statement a key theme of the story? In what ways does it

- apply to Holly Oak, Susannah, the Blue-Haired Old Ladies, and even Adelaide and Marielle?
8. In a way, *A Sound Among the Trees* is a ghost story without a ghost. Who is Adelaide's ghost? Carson's? Does Marielle have a ghost?
 9. Adelaide tells Marielle that Holly Oak is stuck, like a needle on a record. What does she mean? At the end of the book, Caroline explains that it is actually Adelaide who is stuck. In what way do the characteristics Adelaide gives to Holly Oak refer instead to herself? Why do you think she projects her unhappiness upon her home in this way?
 10. With which character do you most closely identify? Adelaide? Marielle? Susannah? Caroline? Someone else? Why do you relate to this character? What similarities does her story have to your own?