

# Book Club Kit

*A Hundred Crickets Singing*

# Meet Cathy Gohlke

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Bestselling, Christy Hall of Fame, and Carol and INSPY Award–winning author Cathy Gohlke writes novels steeped with inspirational lessons, speaking of world and life events through the lens of history. She champions the battle against oppression, celebrating the freedom found only in Christ. Cathy has worked as a school librarian, drama director, and director of children's and education ministries. When not traveling to historic sites for research, she and her husband, Dan, divide their time between northern Virginia and the Jersey Shore, enjoying time with their grown children and grandchildren. Visit her website at [cathygohlke.com](http://cathygohlke.com) and find her on social media; on Bookbub (@CathyGohlke); and on YouTube, where you can subscribe to Book Gems with Cathy Gohlke for short videos of book recommendations.

Through her website, Cathy is glad to schedule virtual visits with book clubs, schools, churches, or reading groups.

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P.S. Visit Cathy's website [authorcathygohlke.com](http://authorcathygohlke.com) to sign up to get news delivered directly to your inbox!

# *A Hundred Crickets Singing*

## Book Trivia

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1

Minnie is living where when she writes *Obadiah and Martha* after leaving Belvidere Hall?

2

It's what month when the novel begins and a storm damages the roof at Garden's Gate?

3

After the tree falls through the attic roof, who comes to help Celia cut it down and remove it?

4

In the trunk in the attic, Celia discovers two versions of what book hidden away?

5

Joe creates what to help him prepare the pasta for the big dinner in *No Creek*?

Trivia continued on the next page

6

Where does Marshall introduce Ivy to Joe?

7

Who performs the wedding ceremony for Marshall and Ivy?

8

What's the name of the young man who wants to marry Minnie?

9

After Elliot dies, Minnie cares for his and Emma's baby. What's the baby's name?

10

Where is Reverend Willard stationed overseas?

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Answers on the next page

# *A Hundred Crickets Singing*

## Book trivia answers

- 1.) Dare County
- 2.) March
- 3.) Congregants from Saints Delight, including Olney Tate
- 4.) *Les Misérables*
- 5.) A device to cut pasta into strips
- 6.) Trafalgar Square
- 7.) Reverend Sloane, the vicar from Ivy's church
- 8.) Tom Chatsworth
- 9.) Ellie
- 10.) Weymouth

My trivia score:

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# A Note from Cathy Gohlke

Long have I loved the characters brought to life in my first No Creek novel, *Night Bird Calling*. They are friends and family, some cohorts and some folks I'll forever hold at bay, the small town we all might have grown up in or imagined from a bygone era.

I was not ready to leave those dear souls behind but felt eager to better understand their past and wanted to imagine their future. In them and their history I saw a microcosm of our world, of our past, and wondered what they might have to say to us, so many decades later.

I felt the same about our national narrative on race. I needed to understand more about the past in order to make sense of the present and garner realistic hope for the future.

In history classes there has long been a gap between the abolition of slavery in the 1860s and the march for Civil Rights in the 1960s, let alone where we are today. What happened? How and why did Jim Crow first appear? Why did we, as Americans, allow the oppression and cruelty of Jim Crow after fighting a bloody civil war meant to end slavery?

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Why was there still division of race in the US military during WWII, and what was the result of that? Why were black American soldiers treated differently in Europe than they were in America—even after fighting a war to end Nazi supremacy, persecution, and oppression of other races and minorities? Were black American hopes of “double victory”—victory in the war and victory at home—realistic?

News reports such as the blinding of Sergeant Isaac Woodard, a returning black WWII veteran in uniform, just hours after being honorably discharged, by a South Carolina police officer suggest not. Sergeant Woodard’s experience inspired the beating that Private Marshall Raymond received in *A Hundred Crickets Singing* when, honorably discharged, he stepped off the train in No Creek.

There were measures written into our laws to help veterans returning from WWII, but did the American GI Bill help all veterans regardless of race? If so, why did comparatively few black GIs benefit? Why the continued disparity in wealth and opportunities? Why does such a divide still exist today? What does it mean to grow up white in our society? What does it mean to grow up as a person of color in our society?

Researching these topics opened a floodgate of new questions, insights, and revelations that I’d never gleaned in history class. More digging was required. In that digging and through personal interviews, I discovered a mine I’d not tapped—historical records; books; firsthand accounts, anecdotes, and stories; film footage, newspaper clippings, and propaganda.

The memories of older people, many now passed, were precious troves. Little did they know what a treasure their records and stories would prove to writers—novelists, attempting to tell the stories of their time.

The characters and experiences in *A Hundred Crickets Singing* are fictitious. Many are based on compilations of the experiences of real people.

Elliott Belvidere’s Civil War experience as a Southern militia captain who remained loyal to the Constitution, was tried and condemned to death for treason by Jefferson Davis, and finally reprieved to serve as a Confederate army cook and later an ambulance driver through the intervention of a superior officer was inspired by the archives, the stand, and experiences of Samuel Smith Goforth, my great-great-grandfather. His story helped me realize that few issues leading to war are clear-cut to those caught in its reality.

History judges in retrospect, when victors and facts are better known, and the trajectory of paths and their consequences plain to see. Living in the moment and through such times is a different story.

Issues and “sides” expressed through many voices, each one convinced they are right, that God is on their side, determined to carry the day can create confusion—a hundred crickets screeching—or glimpses into a path forward. As Celia wondered, how can God listen to all that? Does He take sides in war? The Union and Confederate armies were each convinced that God was on their side, as many have been in wars and arguments since.

No matter what we judge to be true, it is clear that wars and the causes they battle in the first place are of our own making. The important question is not whose side is God on, but are we on God’s side and will we allow Him to change our hearts to become more like His? In that transformation, our cacophony is more likely to become a hymn of praise, a symphony of very different instruments—lives lived to bring Him glory and praise and to dwell with one another in harmony.

Listening with a determination to understand the why behind rhetoric and actions, even those we deplore, can help us reach across the divide to one another as human beings, discard lies and propaganda, defuse anger, embrace truth on every side, deal straightforwardly with consequences, and build pathways to a better tomorrow.

I’m reminded of a poem that I learned while growing up, “If We Only Understood,” attributed to Rudyard Kipling. The final lines capture the heart of its message: “We would love each other better if we only understood.”

I hope that *A Hundred Crickets Singing* is a step in that direction.

I love hearing from you. Write to me through my website, [cathygohlke.com](http://cathygohlke.com). Let me know what you think and what you see or are doing to help heal the wounds in our world, in our nation, in your community or family. Know that I am praying God’s rich blessings for you.

By His amazing grace,

*Cathy Gohlke*



"Justice and mercy were her causes, reading  
and writing her weapons of choice."

*A Hundred Crickets Singing*



# Q&A

## With Cathy Gohlke

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**What inspired you to write *A Hundred Crickets Singing*? What particular issues in the time periods, as well as our current time period, prompted your interest?**

A.) I loved the characters and town of No Creek in *Night Bird Calling* and wanted to not only continue their story but delve into their past.

I was inspired by our country's need for racial justice, and especially by our need to know, understand, and own the sins of our past in order to move forward into an honest future based on fairness, compassion, mercy, and equity.

When I learned of the treatment of "brown babies"—children born of white English girls and Black American GIs during WWII—as well as the laws prohibiting marriage between such couples, the unfairness Black American GIs experienced in the armed services and when hoping to access benefits of the GI Bill, the importance of inherited wealth and land ownership, and the effects of redlining, I felt compelled to write a story that would not only expose these things for myself and readers, but that would show the many sides of the story and the history of all that led to that era.



*Continued on next page*

**Is there one character whose experience you especially identify with or one whose story grew out of lessons you have learned in your own life?**

Celia. I understand her desire to make things right, her dogged determination for social justice and mercy for those she loves and champions, her belief that good should and will prevail. She doesn't always make the wisest or most informed decisions, but she does her best from a good heart. She aspires to write great stories and, despite her bent for solving mysteries, is a romantic at heart. That sounds a lot like me.

**What did you learn by writing this novel, and what lessons do you hope your readers take away?**

I learned so much about the roots and evolution of racism in our country, how we arrived where we are now in terms of disparity in incomes, land and business ownership, politics, societal mores, and attitudes. Tracing this stream—or problem—to its source was enlightening beyond measure.

I hope readers will draw conclusions that lead them to stand for those in need, vote for needed changes in our laws and zoning, and reach out to others of different races and nationalities in friendship, brotherhood, and compassion. I hope readers will view those things as natural responses to our admonition to love our neighbors as ourselves, to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God.

**Discuss with your group: Have you gained fresh insight into the story after hearing the author talk about it? How so?:**

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# Discussion Questions

1. Elliott Belvidere is a North Carolina native determined to remain loyal to the Constitution even when his state secedes and joins the Confederacy. What do you think of his refusal to bear arms for the Confederacy, even to the point of death? What do you imagine you'd have done in his position?
2. *Les Misérables* was popular with both Union and Confederate troops during the American Civil War, but they identified with the story in different ways. How does Tom's reaction to the book differ from Minnie's? Where have you seen examples of people interpreting the same words through different eyes and hearts?
3. How does Minnie attempt to ensure that her family's wishes regarding the land deeded to Obadiah and Martha Tate will be heeded? In what ways is she held back by the constraints of her time? How does Celia try to help, and what barriers does she encounter, even so many years later?
4. After his parents died when he was only six years old, Joe stopped believing God cared or had the power to stop such things from happening. How does his faith change over the course of this story? Which characters influence him along the way? Who has played a pivotal role in your own journey of faith?
5. Black veterans who served in WWII generally received more respect and better treatment by foreign governments and societies than they were used to at home. Were they right to expect that race relations and treatment would have improved when they returned to the US—Double V for Double Victory? What did they discover upon returning? How do you think that affected them then and in their future?

*Continued on next page*

*Discussion questions continued*

6. What do you think of Britain's early policy regarding the adoption of "brown babies"—children born of black American soldiers and white British women and placed in orphanages? Why do you think Britain did not want to recognize paternal rights of the biological fathers? Do you think their decisions were based on issues of race, politics, prejudice, or something else?

7. Alma, later called Granny Chree, willed her life savings to Marshall, but neither Granny Chree nor the Tates told Marshall that she was his great-grandaunt. Why do you imagine he was not told? Why do you think Olney didn't want to talk about slavery days or reopen the question of his family's land?

8. The GI Bill, signed by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt on June 22, 1944, provided returning veterans with unique opportunities to procure higher education, housing, low-interest loans to start businesses, and a year of unemployment compensation. Black veterans, while not strictly excluded, were not as able to take advantage of those benefits as white veterans. How did the ability or inability to take advantage of the GI Bill affect different people? Did those advantages or disadvantages affect your family? In what way?

9. Celia knows that "in No Creek, there were things you just didn't ask, opinions you dared not give voice to, unless you were sure of the person." How is this demonstrated in both the Civil War and WWII eras? In what ways does No Creek change in the intervening years?

10. Joe believes that "sharing a good time and good food always helps. It sets the stage for harmony." Is he proven right through the community pasta dinner? Have you experienced a time when food and fellowship broke down barriers?

*Continued on next page*

*Discussion questions continued*

11. Grayson Belvidere never told his daughter, Hyacinth, about her aunt Minnie or the work she did to transport enslaved people to freedom and to share the family’s land with the freed men and women of Belvidere Hall. Why do you think Grayson never revealed this history to his daughter? In what ways is Minnie’s legacy still realized in Hyacinth? In Lilliana? In Celia?

12. The title *A Hundred Crickets Singing* calls to mind a line from Minnie’s diary where she laments trying to make sense of the conflicting voices all around her. But Celia eventually likens all the voices and prayers across the decades to “a choir, a hundred crickets singing a chorus of praise.” Discuss that change in perspective. Where have you seen God work—over many years or even many lifetimes—to bring harmony out of what might at first seem like chaos and discord?

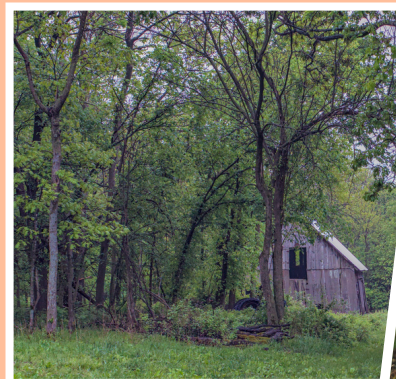
**Reflect: What questions do you have about the story? Jot those down here and ask them in your book club.**

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BOOK CLUB GATHERING IDEA!

# Joe's Spaghetti Dinner

In *A Hundred Crickets Singing*, Joe prepares Italian style pasta to share with the people of No Creek at a spaghetti dinner. For fun, you and your book club might create your own spaghetti dinner to share as you discuss the novel. Find a menu on the next page with recipes linked. Enjoy!

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# Dinner Menu

## Starter:

Fresh Italian bread with herbed butter

## Salad:

A simple Italian salad with homemade vinaigrette

## Entrée:

Homemade Italian pasta and Italian meatballs with marinara

## Dessert:

Tiramisù

"Food brings people together. Food is what we all have in common—food and the need for laughter."

*A Hundred Crickets Singing*

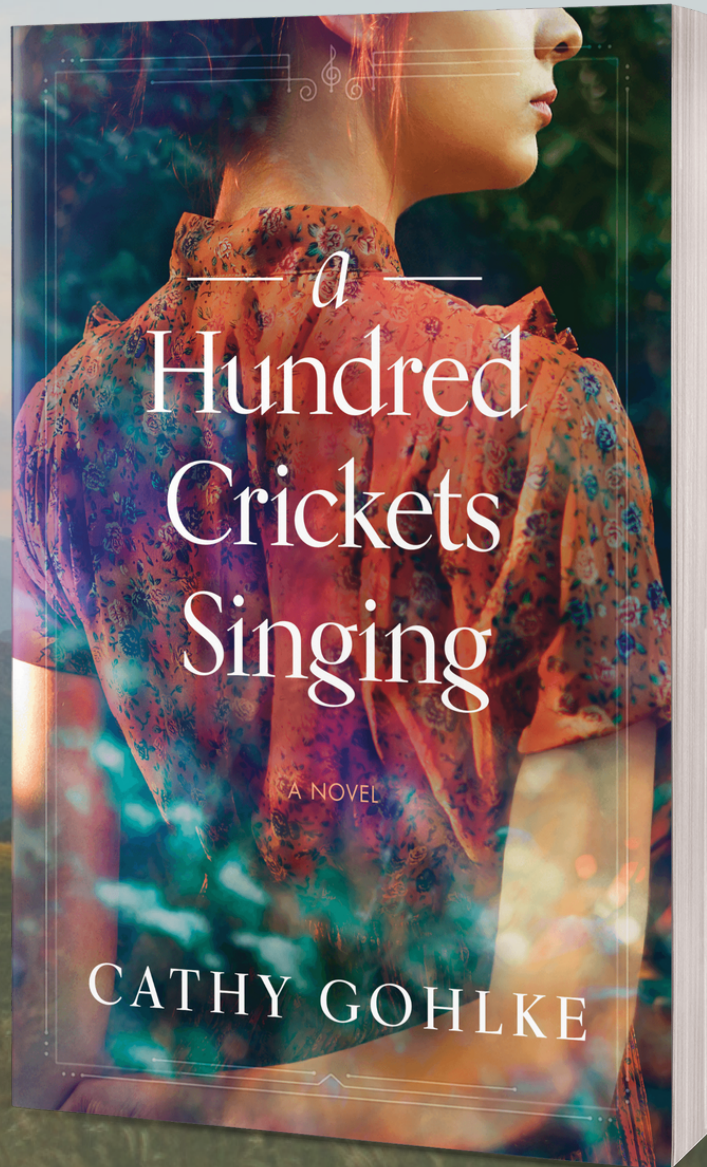
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Thanks for choosing

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for your book club

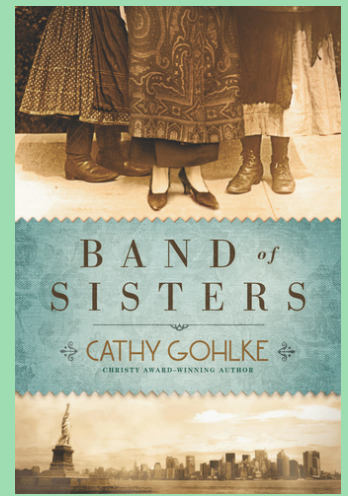
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