



# The Vanishing Half

Brit Bennett

A sweeping, tender story of twin sisters whose lives diverge across decades, identity, and the secrets they keep. It is the kind of book that begs to be discussed over a slow, soft evening with people you trust.

**Reading level:** Moderate

**Best for:** Clubs who love character-driven family sagas and conversations that turn personal

## Discussion

### WARM-UP

1. Where did you do most of your reading, and did you have a favorite cozy ritual (tea, blanket, certain chair) while you were with this book?
2. Was there a scene that made you want to call a sister, cousin, or old friend? What about it pulled at you?

### DIGGING IN

1. The story moves between small Southern towns and bigger cities. Which setting felt the most like home to you while reading, and why?
2. So much of this book is about the quiet weight of family stories. What is a small family story or saying from your own life that came back to you while reading?
3. Bennett writes mothers and daughters with so much tenderness and friction. Which mother-daughter moment in the book stayed with you the longest?
4. The twins choose very different lives. Setting judgment aside, which sister's daily world did you find more comforting to spend time in as a reader?

### GOING DEEP

1. This is a book about the parts of ourselves we hide or leave behind. Without going into spoilers, was there a moment that made you think gently about something you have tucked away in your own life?
2. By the end, what feeling were you left holding, more than any one plot point? Try to describe it like a weather report for your heart.

## On the table

### **Slow-simmered gumbo or jambalaya**

A nod to the book's Louisiana roots, the kind of one-pot dish that says stay a while

### **Buttermilk biscuits with honey butter**

Soft, Southern, and meant for tearing apart over conversation

### **Warm peach cobbler with vanilla ice cream**

A comforting Southern dessert that tastes like a porch in summer

## To sip

### **Sweet tea with lemon and mint (no alcohol)**

The classic Southern non-alcoholic pour, easy to sip all night

### **Spiced bourbon hot toddy**

Honey, lemon, a little whiskey, warming and a little indulgent

### **Chicory coffee with cream (no alcohol)**

A New Orleans staple for the slow, lingering part of the evening

## Run of show

**7:00**

### **Soft landing**

Greet guests with sweet tea and biscuits while the playlist hums in the background

**7:20**

### **Warm-ups**

Settle in with blankets and ask the two warm-up questions, no pressure to go in order

**7:40**

### **Dinner together**

Serve gumbo or jambalaya family-style and let the theme questions come up naturally between bites

**8:20**

### **Cobbler and deeper talk**

Bring out dessert and toddies, slow the pace, move into the deep questions

**9:00**

### **Trivia and scorecards**

Light, low-stakes round of trivia, then fill out scorecards together

**9:30**

### **Lingering goodbyes**

Refill coffee, hand out bookmarks, let people stay as long as they want

## HOST TIPS

- Set out throws, floor cushions, and warm lamps instead of overhead lights so people feel free to curl up
- Let silences breathe. With a tender book, the pause after a question is often where the real answer lives
- Have a basket of extra copies, sticky notes, and pens so guests can flag passages that moved them

## Playlist

*Warm, slow-burn soul and Americana with a Southern hum*

01 A Change Is Gonna Come - Sam Cooke

03 Tupelo Honey - Van Morrison

05 Ain't No Sunshine - Bill Withers

07 Tougher Than the Rest - Emmylou Harris

02 At Last - Etta James

04 Harvest Moon - Neil Young

06 River - Joni Mitchell

08 I Say a Little Prayer - Aretha Franklin

# Trivia

1. Who wrote *The Vanishing Half*? (Brit Bennett)
2. In what year was *The Vanishing Half* first published? (2020)
3. What was Brit Bennett's debut novel, published before this one? (*The Mothers*)
4. The story is largely set in a small fictional town in which U.S. state? (Louisiana)
5. The novel follows two sisters of what relation to each other? (Identical twins)
6. Across roughly how many decades does the story unfold? (Several decades, from about the 1950s into the 1990s)
7. *The Vanishing Half* was a finalist for which major U.S. book award in 2020? (The National Book Award for Fiction)
8. On which long-running U.S. bestseller list did the book spend many weeks at or near the top? (The New York Times Best Sellers list)

## Rate the book

Coziness of the read ☆☆☆☆☆

Characters you wanted to hug ☆☆☆☆☆

Emotional warmth ☆☆☆☆☆

Lingering after-feeling ☆☆☆☆☆

Reread comfort ☆☆☆☆☆

One word for how this book made me feel: \_\_\_\_\_

A scene I want to wrap in a blanket: \_\_\_\_\_

Who I want to talk to after closing this book: \_\_\_\_\_

YOU'RE INVITED

## Pull Up a Chair: A Cozy Night with *The Vanishing Half*

Come for gumbo, cobbler, and a slow, warm conversation about Brit Bennett's tender family saga. Soft clothes encouraged, big feelings welcome.



**Plan your own book club night**

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