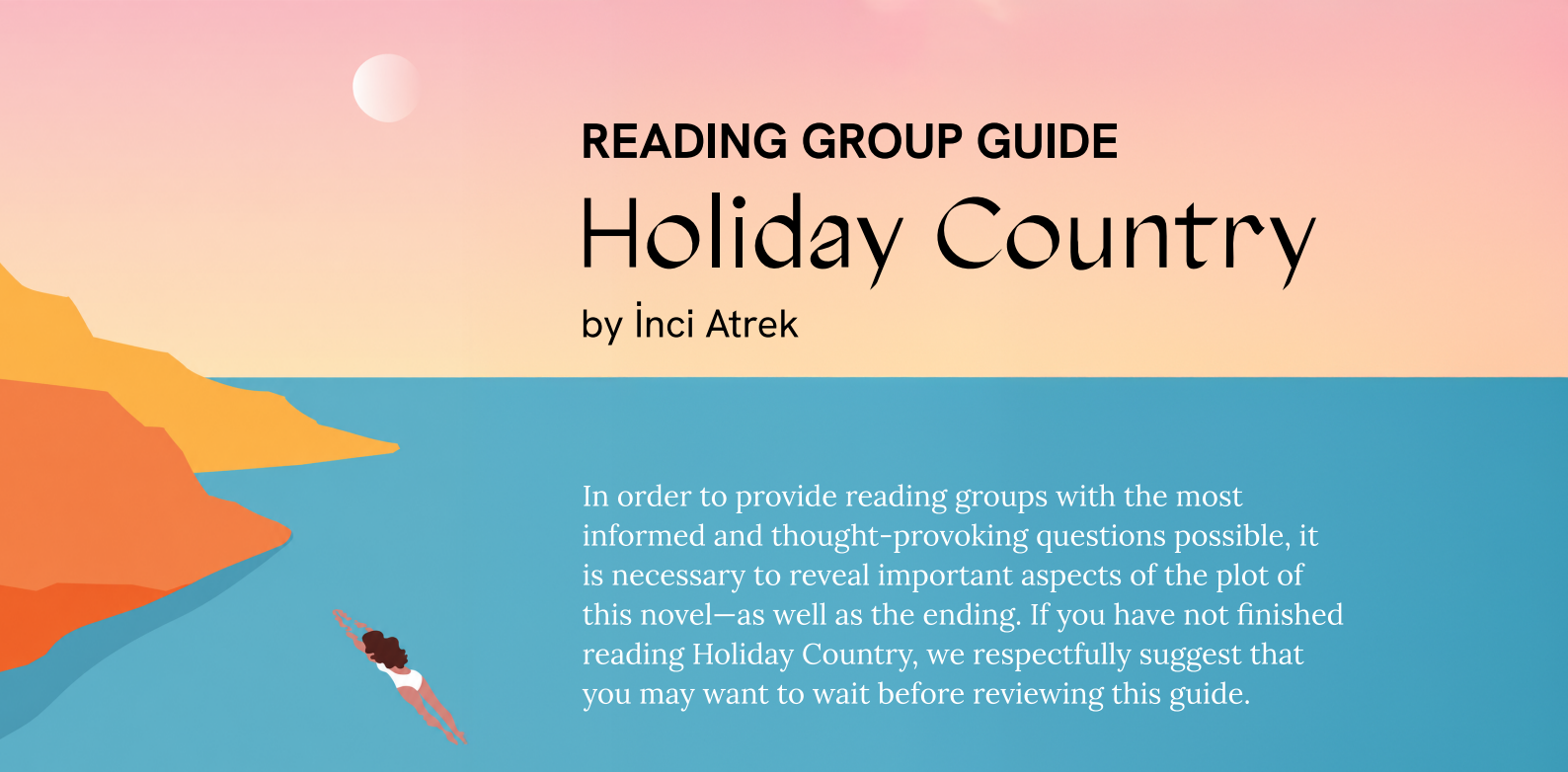




READING GROUP GUIDE

Holiday Country

by İnci Atrek

In order to provide reading groups with the most informed and thought-provoking questions possible, it is necessary to reveal important aspects of the plot of this novel—as well as the ending. If you have not finished reading *Holiday Country*, we respectfully suggest that you may want to wait before reviewing this guide.

Welcome to the Reading Group Guide for *Holiday Country*.

1. Before embarking on the trip to Ayvalık, Meltem reads her coffee grounds fortune as “a declaration of love disguised as a betrayal” (p. 12). How does this fortune manifest throughout the story? In what ways could the various betrayals from both mother and daughter be seen as acts of love?
2. At the Republic Day Ball, a Turkish-American woman mentions that Turkey is “nothing more than a holiday country” (p. 35) for their children, the children of immigrants. How does Ada feel about this phrase, and what does it represent for her?
3. Ada has very strong feelings toward Deniz, a fellow Turkish-American at the Republic Day Ball (pp. 33-37). What’s driving Ada’s judgmental attitude toward Deniz?
4. Ada tells Ian that she won’t be in contact with him much during her summer abroad. Why doesn’t she want to keep in touch with her boyfriend while she’s in Ayvalık — even prior to developing a crush on Levent? Why is Ada so afraid of what a relationship with Ian would mean for her?
5. The conversation over breakfast with Neslihan is a turning point for Ada (Chapter 9). Why does Ada feel better about her decision to pursue Levent after Neslihan reveals details about Meltem’s past?
6. Throughout the novel, Ada has the odd sensation that her and her mother’s fates are intertwined. Which moments seem to suggest to Ada that she is incapable of becoming her own person? How does Ada react in these moments?

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7. When Ada observes Levent from inside the mulberry bush, she's gathering clues to the type of person that he is. What does Ada think Levent's habits mean about him, and about her? What habits of yours do you think project meaning to others, whether cultural or personal?

8. Though Ada and her friends are older, the younger girls of the town are constantly undermining Ada, either directly or indirectly. What are some examples of when Ada feels threatened by the group, and how does she try to establish a power dynamic between herself and the girls?

9. The Turkish language, for Ada, serves as both a connection to her mother's homeland and a point of alienation, as she is frequently reminded that she is not a native speaker. What role does language play in Ada's sense of her own identity? Why is she so obsessed with her mother's language skills?

10. With such a domineering grandmother, why do Ada and Meltem keep coming back every summer? If it were you, would you continue to go every year for several months?

11. Though they have a great time together during the summer, Ada and her friends lead different lives over the winter. Would you consider their friendship a real friendship? If Ada had lived in Turkey, would they be friends outside of this summer town?

12. Games of chance and fortune telling appear frequently throughout the novel. What are Ada's thoughts toward her own fate, and her level of control over it? Do you believe in fate, or have any superstitions?

13. The island swim is an aspirational activity that constantly looms over the group. What does this swim represent for Ada? Does that representation change toward the end of the book, both during and after her final attempt at the swim?

14. In a twist of irony, Ada's days in Istanbul are relegated to the more touristy parts of the city. What did Ada desire to gain from her Istanbul trip, and what does she end up leaving it with?

15. Holiday Country takes place in a small town where everyone knows each other, and the gossip is rampant. In a town like this, do Ada's actions have greater repercussions than they would in a big city? Why or why not?

16. Discuss a city or a place that you visited briefly, but fell in love with. What was it about the place that incited these feelings? Did others challenge you about your relationship to the place?