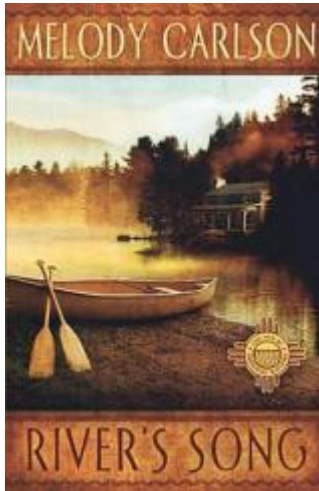


## River's Song: The Inn at Shining Waters Series, Book 1

by Melody Carlson

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### About the Book

#### **Sometimes when we look back, we are able to see ahead...**

Following her mother's funeral, and on the verge of her own midlife crisis, widow Anna Larson returns to the home of her youth to sort out her parents' belongings, as well as her own turbulent life.

For the first time since childhood, Anna embraces her native heritage, despite the disdain of her vicious mother-in-law.

By transforming her old family home on the banks of the Siuslaw River into The Inn at Shining Waters, Anna hopes to create a place of healing --- a place where guests experience peace, grace, and new beginnings. Starting with her own family...

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### Discussion Guide

1. Anna's story begins on a somber note. Not much is going right in her life. And yet she still seems to have a smidgeon of hope. Why do you think that is? Can you relate?
2. Not uncommon in Native American philosophy, the river is almost like a character in this story. Describe why you think Anna was so moved by it. Have you ever been moved by a geographical location? Explain.
3. Like many American's in this melting pot country, Anna's heritage is diverse. How do you think that was helpful or harmful to her?
4. Describe what you think Marion (Anna's mother) and Pearl's (Anna's grandmother) relationship was like when Marion was younger.
5. Anna remembers how her family had to "make do" during the Depression, lamenting that it's too bad people don't live like that today. What is something you'd like to "return" to if you could?
6. It required a full cast of friends to help Anna heal and take a proactive role in her own life. Which relationships did you think were most valuable and why?
7. Not much is mentioned about why Eunice is Eunice, but we know she has a story too (which you'll hear

more about in book two). But why do you think she was so bitter and bigoted and hateful?

**8.** Racial divisions aren't uncommon in our country (especially historically). So what was it that helped Anna, and those around her, to knock down those walls?

**9.** Lauren comes across as somewhat frothy and superficial. Why do you think she's like this? Do you think it's possible that she'll change? Explain.

**10.** In some ways, Clark is Anna's knight in shining armor. How did you react when he proposed to her? Do you think he should've done it differently?

**11.** Anna believes the river has healing properties. Some say Anna has a healing touch too. This is understandable in Native American culture, but what is your reaction to it?

**12.** Grandma Pearl's stories (which are compilations of the writer's imagination as well as some elements of authentic Native American stories) sometimes seemed relevant to the story. Could you relate to any of them? Which one and why?

**13.** Ultimately, Anna finds herself by returning to the river. Do you think there are reasons that we learn more about ourselves when we return to the places of our youth? Why or why not?

#### Author Bio

Melody Carlson is the award-winning author of over 200 books with sales of more than five million. She is the author of several Christmas books from Revell, including the bestselling THE CHRISTMAS BUS, THE CHRISTMAS DOG, and CHRISTMAS AT HARRINGTON'S, which is being considered for a TV movie. She is also the author of many teen books, including JUST ANOTHER GIRL, ANYTHING BUT NORMAL, DOUBLE TAKE, the *Life at Kingston High* series, and the *Diary of a Teenage Girl* series. She is the winner of a *Romantic Times* Career Achievement Award in the inspirational market for her many books, including the *Diary of a Teenage Girl* series and FINDING ALICE. Melody and her husband live in Oregon.

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