

The Last Days of Dogtown

By Anita Diamant

1. Diamant explains in her Author's Note that, though Dogtown was a real village, her stories are woven from the thinnest of historical threads. Does the novel feel authentic to you nonetheless? Why or why not? What things has Diamant done to bring this New England ghost town back to life?

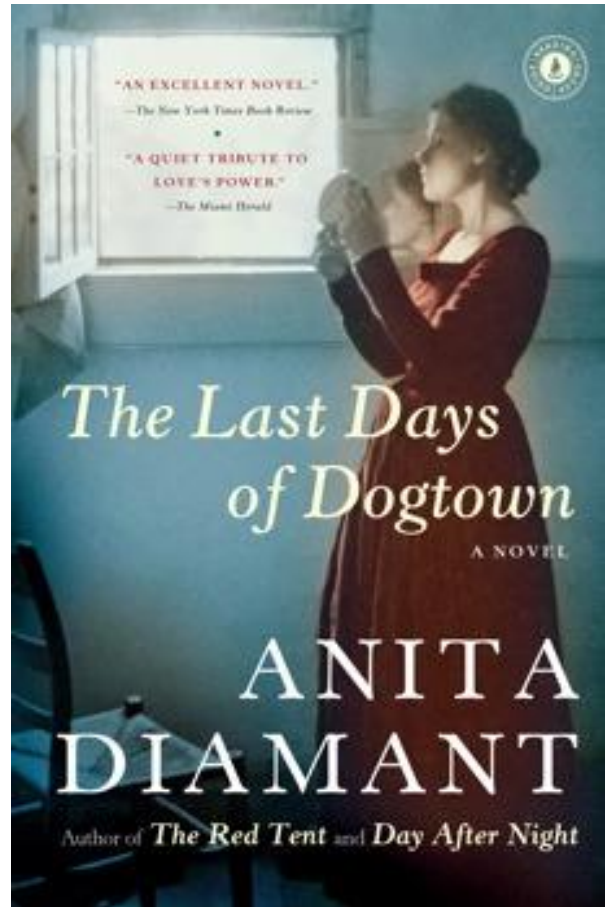
2. On page 20, we learn of the relationship between Cornelius and Judy. Discuss their situation. Do you sympathize with Cornelius' fear? Or do you think he unfairly abandoned Judy?

3. Ruth speaks little and reveals less. What can we tell about her through her relationship with Easter, and what is the significance of Ruth's identifying Easter with Mimba?

4. What sorts of things do the women of Dogtown do to demonstrate their independence? Consider Easter, Ruth, Judy, Molly, and Sally, for example.

5. Discuss the many "forbidden loves" that occur in *The Last Days of Dogtown*, such as Cornelius and Judy, and Sally and Molly. Why are each "forbidden" and how does their impossibility influence each situation?

6. On pages 195-196, Oliver struggles with a feeling of unease over the suspicion that Cornelius and Judy may have had a love affair. Discuss



what, exactly, Oliver means by "the African question." Do you think Oliver's disgust has as much to do with Cornelius' race as it does with the fact that he once had a boyhood crush on Judy himself?

7. How does the last generation of Dogtown inhabitants get free? Discuss the stories of Judy Rhines, Oliver Younger, Sammy Stanley, and Polly Wharf.

8. How does the novel's ending make you feel? Why do you think Diamant chose to end the novel with Cornelius' death, Judy's departure, and her letter?

9. If you've read *The Red Tent*, do you see any similarities between that book and *The Last Days of Dogtown*? Do you think you can identify Diamant's "style?"

10. How does Diamant use the pack of wild dogs to parallel and/or illustrate important things about the human inhabitants of Dogtown? Can you draw some connections between individual canines and people, such as Greyling and Judy Rhines?

11. How does Diamant convey the isolation and imminent demise of Dogtown using imagery?