

Book lovers enjoy talking about the book they're reading. For that reason, I encourage my readers to start a reading group or join an existing one—you'll enhance the enjoyment of a good book and gain other readers' interesting, sometimes amazing, further thought-provoking perspectives. In my own reading group, fellow-readers have sometimes introduced a whole new dimension to a book, things I hadn't thought of on my own, simply because of their own background and life experiences. I've had to "rethink" the book, shift my brain over a notch or two, to make room for this new information! An insightful reading group is like a bonus prize on a good book. I've written the questions that follow to enhance your reading of PERIPHERAL VIEW and encourage discussion in your reading groups.

I'd love to hear about your reading group. You can share what you're reading and information about your group by emailing me at: rita@peripheralviewnovel.com.

Reading Group Guide—PERIPHERAL VIEW

1. Discuss the thematic significance of the title PERIPHERAL VIEW.
2. At its heart, PERIPHERAL VIEW is a love story. Discuss the relationship between Pearl and Sonny. Sonny is slightly mentally impaired, discuss Pearl's acceptance of this. Is it unconditional love, is it seeing beyond a peripheral view, or something else?
3. In the beginning of the story, Pearl suggests that she is not bitter towards anyone for her situation. Do you think that is true? Does it continue to be true throughout the story? How do you think Pearl coped with her feelings towards her sister?
4. Do you think Matthew underestimated Pearl's abilities, or do you think he was naïve—what kept him from helping her from the start? He seemed to fight it the longest, why do you think he did that? Discuss what motivated him to finally help Pearl.
5. Nurse Charlotte could have turned away from Pearl and simply not gotten involved with her plight. Charlotte suggests that she found redemption in helping Pearl. Do you think that Charlotte would have helped Pearl without that motivation? What else might have motivated her to get involved?
6. Discuss Jordana's relationship with her mother. She started out with a fear of losing her mother's love. Do you think she ever got over that fear?
7. What do you think scared Jordana the most about getting involved with Pearl? Was it Pearl being different, her own peripheral view, or the loss of her mother's love and approval?
8. Discuss the changes that Jordana's character went through in the story. How do you think that discovering what her mother had done to Pearl impacted Jordana's thoughts about her mother? What/who was responsible for the changes in Jordana: was it Susan, Pearl, or something else?

9. Discuss Matthew and Jordana's relationship. How had Susan's influence penetrated Jordana's thoughts on men and relationships? Matthew seems like a sincere man, how might this scare Jordana? Why do you think that Matthew is attracted to Jordana, other than her physical beauty? Where do you think Matthew and Jordana's relationship is going? Do you think it could have gone there without Matthew and Jordana having teamed up to help Pearl?
10. Why do you think young Pearl went along with her parent's plan to place her into a nursing home, do you think she had a choice? Was she a victim of her time?
11. Discuss Susan's psyche and her history. What may have led her to push Pearl so far out of her life?
12. Do you think Pearl could have changed her situation sooner, or did she need an incentive like Sonny to get her going on it? What do you think stopped her from acting earlier?
13. What is your emotional reaction to the warden? To Pearl being drugged?
14. Pearl was often hurt by the way others viewed her. How do you think Pearl's personality was shaped by their views?
15. Pearl had a good wit and sense of humor; do you think that she sometimes used it to intentionally zing Susan, or do you think she didn't realize the impact of what she was saying?
16. Pearl trusted Sonny, but had little trust for anyone else in the beginning. Do you think that changed by the end of the story? Many things happened that could have confirmed her mistrust, but had enough positive circumstances happened that would encourage her to trust others more?
17. At the end of the story, Susan laments that she'd missed out on a relationship with Pearl. Do you think she meant a relationship with Pearl as she was, or what Susan wished she could be?
18. Discuss Susan's change of heart and her revelation that Pearl was happier than she was. How do you think Susan came to this realization?