

Reading Group Guide

1. Why do you think the author chose to title her memoir “In Pieces”? What does that title mean to you in terms of the story? Do you think your experience of the book would have been different if it had had a different title? Why or why not?
2. Field’s opening chapter focuses on “My Grandmother’s Daughter,” telling the story of her mother and the “world of women” who raised Margaret, and would later help raise Sally and Ricky. What is the significance of this world to young Sally and to the book itself? Why begin here, with the focus on her grandmother Joy? And why does she introduce her mother as “my grandmother’s daughter”?
3. When Sally is four years old, she meets her future stepfather, Jocko, for the first time. As he holds the frightened little girl, she says, “Maybe to be comforted and admired, I had to be terrified as well, maybe that’s what I was supposed to learn.” How do you see this moment playing out in the rest of the book, and in Field’s personal and professional lives as an adult? How do you think her life might have been different if she had learned a different lesson from that moment, or if her mother had rushed in to comfort the scared child? Can you think of any similar “turning point” moments in your own life?
4. Family relationships are central to the book, especially Sally’s complicated but loving one with her own mother, Margaret. Describe this relationship. How do you think Field’s relationship with Margaret informed her own actions as a mother of three sons, later on?
5. Field describes her acting as a time when “I felt free...I could hear myself.” Why do you think this was so valuable for her?
6. On page 102, after the casting agent from Screen Gems stops seventeen-year-old Sally on the street and invites her to audition for what will turn out to be the sitcom *Gidget*, Field says, “Something had reached out of nowhere to change my life, just as it had for my mother and even my grandmother before her.” Discuss the role of chance, or fate, in shaping your own history. Do you believe it is always simple coincidence, or something more?
7. A number of very different men flow in and out of Field’s life over the course of the book. What do you think drew her romantically to certain people, from her childhood sweetheart Steven Craig to the flashy heartthrob Burt Reynolds? How much of the decisions we make about who we love are unconsciously driven by established patterns in our own history?
8. Field writes intimately of many traumatic events in her young life, but rarely states them matter-of-factly on the page. Indeed, many of the most painful revelations are unveiled only gradually, such as when, on page 47, she writes, “When I was seven and eight my feet could almost dance across his back, if I’d wanted—but I didn’t. Later, as my feet got bigger, there was no room to dance and no dancing in my heart.” Why do you think she chose to write her own story

this way? Do you find that this storytelling style added to your experience of the book? Why or why not?

9. *In Pieces* tells vivid, revealing, and often very funny stories about Field's early career, as she got her start as Gidget and The Flying Nun, then broke into more serious, award-winning roles in *Sybil* and *Norma Rae*. Why do you think her primary focus in the memoir was on those early years, rather than the big blockbusters of the 1980s and 1990s? To what degree does a well-known author have the right to decide the shape of her own story?
10. Do you consider this memoir a "feminist" book? Why or why not?