



*The Happiness Thief*  
*reading guide*

NICOLE BOKAT

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## ABOUT

NICOLE BOKAT is the author of the novels *Redeeming Eve* and *What Matters Most*. *Redeeming Eve* was nominated for both the Hemingway Foundation/PEN award and the Janet Heidinger Kafka Prize for Fiction. She's also published *The Novels of Margaret Drabble: This Freudian Family Nexus*. She received her Ph.D. from New York University and has taught at NYU, Hunter College, and The New School. Her essays and articles have appeared in *The New York Times*, *Parents magazine*, *The Forward* and at *More.com*. She lives with her husband in New Jersey and has two grown sons. **Nicole is happy to meet with book clubs.** Please contact her online here:



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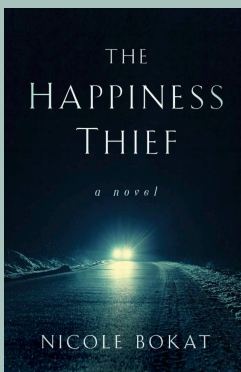
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# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How are images important in this novel? Are all Natalie's memories images?
2. Natalie takes photographs of food. Isabelle asks people to take care of their minds. Discuss the ways this book addresses the theme of nourishment.
3. This novel deals with multiple kinds of mental illness. What characters exhibit mental illness? How do they address their illnesses? How does society treat them?
4. To what does the title refer?
5. *Kirkus Reviews* says that this novel is both a mystery and a character study, which sounds more literary. How does the author wed the two genres?
6. Secrets abound in this novel. Discuss.
7. How does *The Happiness Thief* portray families and mothers? How does it portray romantic relationships?
8. The author plays with lightness and darkness--in taking pictures, in how people see their worlds, in its effects on the plot. How do the multiple ways she plays with color and its absence inform the story?
9. At the end, Natalie believes she sees Isabelle. Is the image she sees the real Isabelle?
10. Do you think there will be a sequel?
11. If this were a movie, how would you cast it?



## ***THE HAPPINESS THIEF: A Novel***

By Nicole Bokar

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Fiction/Domestic Suspense

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# praise

"Bokat is an evocative wordsmith . . . she has crafted a sympathetic heroine as her main character. . . . A compulsively readable mystery and character study."

—**Kirkus Reviews**

"So, so smart, and as downright dangerous a read as the edge of a razor, Bokat's book is a masterful study of memory, family, and the lies that derail us. Don't even dare to think you'll get any sleep once you start reading."

—**Caroline Leavitt**, *New York Times* best-selling author of *Pictures of You* and *With or Without You*

"Sharp, quick-witted, with twists you can't foresee, Bokat's smart new thriller casts a sharp eye on a family's buried secret. In this riveting story of gaslighting, murder, and betrayal, a woman seeking to unlock her past mistakenly trusts one she should not. Some people are like cyanide pills wrapped in chocolate truffle—dangerous, but irresistible. *The Happiness Thief* will swallow you whole."

—**Tess Callahan**, author of *April and Oliver*

"Nicole Bokat has the rare and precious gift of being both a master storyteller and an elegant poet. Each and every sentence dazzles in this intelligent and fiery tale about family, loss, and what it means to feel happy, whole."

—**Judy Batalion**, author of *The Light of Days: The Untold Story of Women Resistance Fighters in Hitler's Ghettos* and *White Walls*

"*The Happiness Thief* is a beautifully written, heart-thundering page-turner. I tore through it, desperate to discover answers. The novel's characters are as rich and complex as you and I."

—**Aspen Matis**, #1 Amazon best-selling author of *Your Blue Is Not My Blue* and *Girl in the Woods*