

"Megan Miranda at her finest: an eerie edge-of-the-earth location, riveting characters, and thrills that just don't quit. Loved this novel."
—LAURA DAVE, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Last Thing He Told Me*

THE LAST TO VANISH

A NOVEL

MEGAN
MIRANDA

AUTHOR OF THE NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLERS
ALL THE MISSING GIRLS AND
THE LAST HOUSE GUEST A REESE WITHERSPOON BOOK CLUB PICK

READING GROUP GUIDE

Introduction

For ten years, Abigail Lovett has been managing the Passage Inn: a cozy, upscale resort nestled in the mountain town of Cutter's Pass. Cutter's Pass is cozy and welcoming at first glance, offering beautiful views, outdoor excursions, and a mysterious (but charming) history to tourists. But years ago, when journalist Landon West—who was staying at the inn to investigate a string of disappearances—vanishes, the town is thrust into the spotlight; one that haunts its inhabitants to this day. Further complicating matters is the sudden arrival of Landon's brother, Trey West, who comes to Cutter's Pass in search of answers. When he and Abby discover incriminating evidence that might uncover the truth of the town's disappearances, its inhabitants begin to close ranks—making it suddenly clear who is an outsider and who is not. Told solely from Abby's perspective and focusing on themes of truth, myth, reality, and the surprising convergence of all three, *The Last to Vanish* brilliantly explores the lengths people will go to to hide their secrets—and not just from each other, either. The narrative also explores the secrets we hide from ourselves, and whether or not we “truly” know the people who surround us.

Topics and Questions for Discussion

1 Despite its appearance as a cozy resort town, Cutter's Pass is portrayed—to the reader—as a cold, isolated, and moody place. Considering the fact that Abby is the book's sole narrator, how might you read this characterization, and what implications does it have regarding her presence within Cutter's Pass?

2 Is Abby a reliable narrator? Why or why not? How do her interactions with other characters embody one of the novel's central concerns: that is, the inability to truly “know” another person?

3 Many different forms of “reality” appear in *The Last to Vanish*. Characters divulge rumors, talk about myths, and share practical (as well as comforting) explanations for the vanishings of past visitors. What does the novel suggest about truth and its relationship to myth?

4 What does the novel say about the secrets we hide? Are those secrets ultimately more “real” than what we're willing to reveal to our friends, our coworkers, ourselves? Consider the truths Cory is able to tell visitors on his ghost tours and the secrets he keeps locked within his chest. Are there “truths” that we can't even reveal to ourselves?

5 How would you characterize the relationships that Abby has with other characters? Are her relationships with the town's longtime residents different from her relationships with semi-outsiders like Georgia? What about with Trey?

6 What does it mean to be part of a community, and what does it mean to be an outsider? Consider the fact that Abby has lived in Cutter's Pass for ten years but still feels (at times) like a stranger. Do you think she'd be more accepted as a member of the community if she didn't start seeking out the truth with Trey? Why or why not?

7 Why do you think the novel opens with a page from Landon West's journal? How did this choice affect your interpretation of the story?

8 Explore the role that “outsiders” play in *The Last to Vanish*, as well as in real life. Are they, like Landon and Trey West, able to pierce through the secrets that close-knit communities hide? Consider, in your evaluation, the role that Abby (who is both an outsider and not) plays in this novel. What kinds of revelations is she privy to as someone who occupies this unique position?

9 Evaluate the theme of morality in this novel. Are you able to tell who is a “good” character and who is not? Explain how and why. Additionally, do you think that we are biased toward Abby because she is the book's narrator?

10 Even though *The Last to Vanish* focuses on events that occur in the past, the main story actually takes place in our COVID present. How do you think this narrative decision affects the reader's experience of the novel? And do you see semblances of our daily life represented within the book's pages?





11 What role does technology play in this novel? Consider how it's used by characters as it relates to the truth (both the uncovering and the obscuring of it). Additionally: you might explore the difference between the author's descriptions of nature and the author's descriptions of manmade objects. Do they vary in any significant way? Discuss.

12 Another theme in *The Last to Vanish* is that of appearance versus reality. In the beginning of the book, Abby describes the Passage Inn as a place that cultivates a false sense of "authenticity" by keeping logs in a gas fireplace.

What, in your opinion, is the author's intention in revealing this detail to the reader? Can you think of real world examples of places (or people) that work to cultivate a certain, perhaps false, image?

13 What does "haunting" mean in the context of Trey's role in the novel, and what does the word mean for the inhabitants of Cutter's Pass at large? Are the longtime residents, like Celeste and Cory, haunted by different things than Georgia or Abby are? Discuss.

Enhance Your Book Club

1 Early in the book, we meet Cory as he gives ghost tours to visitors who want to learn more about the disappearances in Cutter's Pass. He gives rational explanations for why travelers vanish, but he also provides sensationalized reasons (underground cults in a cave network, a man who lives in the mountains, etc.). Consider how real world disappearances and mysteries are portrayed in the media and discuss examples amongst your group. Do you think that Cory is immoral in how he "trivializes" the vanishings of past tourists? Why or why not?

2 Think about an event in the past that strongly affected a community that you're a part of. How has your perspective of this event changed with the passage of time? How has your community's? Do you feel like you understand things better now than before?

3 Write a story about an important event in your life from the perspective of an outsider. Does this shift in point of view alter how you view that event? Discuss.