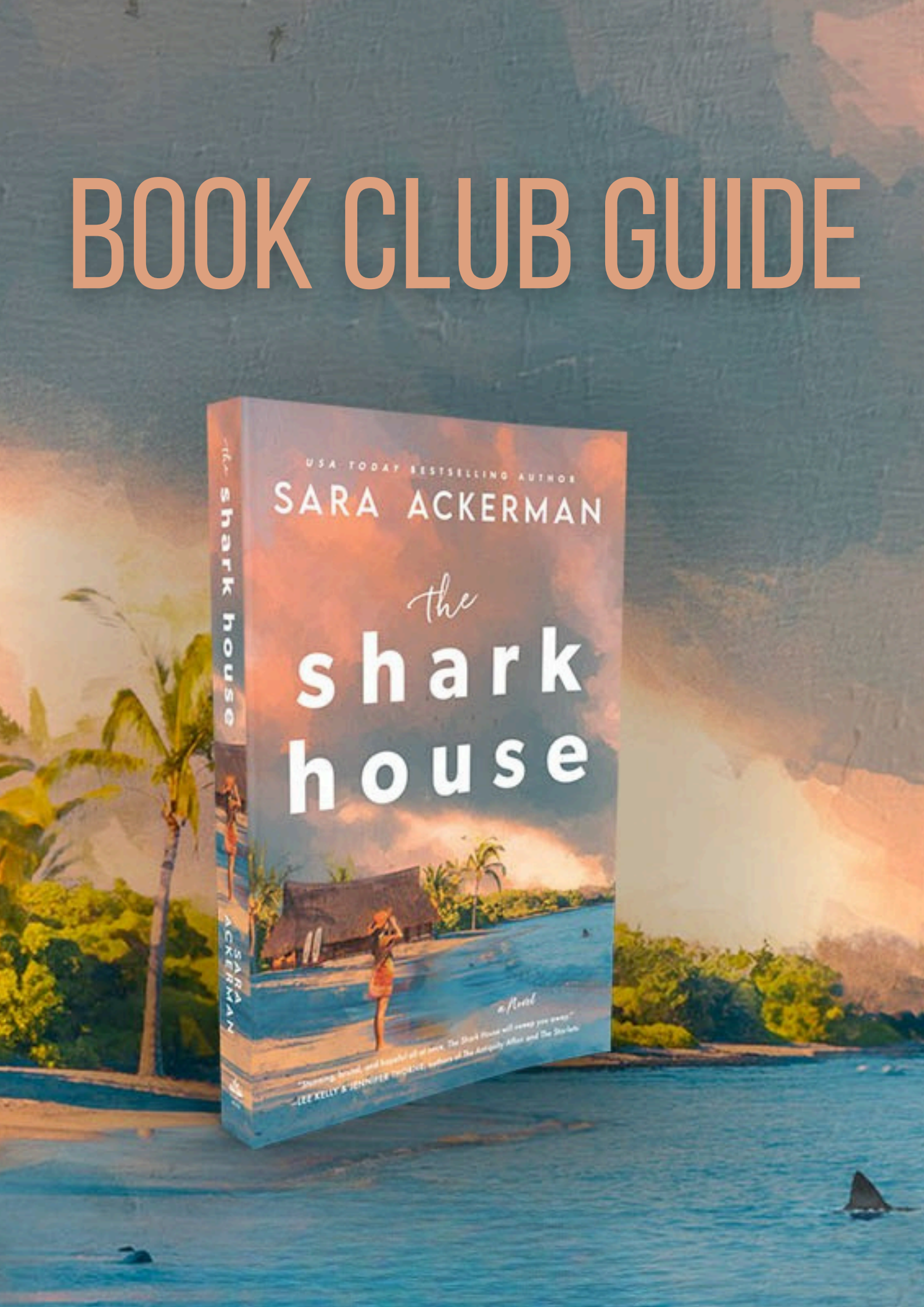
BOOK CLUB GUIDE



ON WRITING THE SHARK HOUSE

When I first started dreaming up my new novel, The Shark House, I knew two things for sure. One, it had to be set in my beloved home, Hawai'i. And two, it had to feature sharks. Not just as a threat lurking in the background, but as central, complex figures woven into the very fabric of the story. And while diving into this world, I discovered a richness and complexity I could never have imagined.

A Near Encounter in Hawaiian Waters

Living in Hawai'i, much of my time is spent in the ocean, and sharks are often on my mind. But it wasn't until more recently, after a near-fatal incident along the coast, that I really took notice. We were on our way to surf when a friend called to let us know of an attack just minutes away, as a shark might swim, from where we were headed. Did we still paddle out? Yes we did, because statistically, shark attacks are rare. You are far more likely to be hit by lightning or drown in your bathtub than be killed by a shark.

Soon after that incident, I had the good fortune to swim with some resident white tip reef sharks and realized what incredibly shy and beautiful creatures they are. That's when I got the idea that maybe I needed to write a shark story that doesn't paint these animals as frenzied, mindless killers, but rather as intelligent apex predators who keep our oceans in balance.

And that's how my main character, Dr. Minnow Gray, was born. She has dedicated her life to studying white sharks but also has a painful family history involving these same animals. That gave me the opportunity to delve into a more layered emotional realm.

We Fear What We Don't Understand

I took extra care to avoid sensationalism when writing about the sharks because I know that readers can feel when a story exaggerates danger for shock value, as is the case with many shark films and shows. Rather than needlessly scare readers, I wanted to enlighten them. These animals are intelligent and marvels of adaptation. White sharks are one of the most feared animals on the planet, yet humans have an incredible fascination with them. We often fear what we don't understand, and fortunately, our understanding of sharks is changing dramatically in recent years. Nowadays, you can track satellite-tagged white and tiger sharks (with names like Deep Blue, Large Marge and Bella) online or on apps. You can follow shark photographers on social media who post daily drone videos of white sharks peacefully swimming underneath surfers, paddleboarders, and swimmers, most of whom are completely unaware. However, sharks are wild animals and they're curious, and maybe 5 to 10 unfortunate people a year are killed by sharks.

Into the Blue Depths

In the end, this novel was so much fun to research, if not slightly terrifying! I must say that now, when I go for open-water swims on the Kohala Coast, I am always scanning the surrounding waters, expecting — dare I say hoping — to see a large shark swim by, completely uninterested in me. I hope you enjoyed my story!

A Night in Hawai'i

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Warning: CAQontains Spoilers!

1. What did you learn (or feel differently) about sharks and the ocean after reading this book? Did it challenge any assumptions?
2. In what ways does Hawai‘i function not just as a setting, but almost as a character in the book? How does the island shape Minnow’s experience?
3. Given the opportunity, would you rather stay at Hale Niuhi/The Shark House or the Kiawe, and why?
4. Minnow Gray is both a scientist and a “shark whisperer.” How does her relationship with sharks reflect her inner life and emotional journey?
5. How does the 1998 setting influence the story? Could this novel have taken place in today’s world, or does the time period add something unique?
6. How do family secrets and unresolved grief shape Minnow’s identity? What does she learn about her past that shifts her perspective?
7. Could you relate to the Kaupiko brothers and their deep connection to the ocean and the sharks?
8. How did you feel about Minnow’s heightened ability to hear? Do you enjoy stories with a hint of magic to them?
9. Would you be for or against a shark hunt?
10. Have you seen the movie Jaws, and how did it affect you?
11. Sharks in this story are both real and symbolic. What do you think the great white shark represents for Minnow? For the larger community?

A Night in Hawai'i

ENTERTAINMENT

This late 90s playlist can settle your nerves if you got frightened reading about sharks, though my hope is the book will have you enjoying them by the end!

Mazzy Star – "Fade Into You"
The Verve – "Bittersweet Symphony"
Massive Attack – "Teardrop"
Portishead – "Roads"
Morcheeba – "The Sea"
Sneaker Pimps – "6 Underground"
Zero 7 – "Destiny"
Hooverphonic – "Mad About You"
Air – "All I Need"
Beth Orton – "She Cries Your Name"

COCKTAILS

DAWN PATROL

1.5 oz Kuleana Huihui (light) Rum
1.5 oz Guava puree
2 oz Orange juice
Splash lime

Shake with ice, and add a Kuleana Nanea (darker) rum floater.

BIG ISLAND BEER

Kona Brew - Kua Bay IPA

Or Big Island Brewhaus - Overboard IPA or Paniolo Pale Ale

A Night in Hawai'i

PINEAPPLE PIZZA

Pineapple pizza has become synonymous with Hawaiian Pizza, and it's one of my favorites. At our house, we often sub out the meat for fresh arugula and veggies.

Dough

I am a huge fan of homemade pizza, so I've included my easy dough recipe, but to save time you can also buy premade dough or crust.

3 cups bread flour
1 t salt
1 ¼ cups water
3 T olive oil
1 small spoonful of honey
1 packet of rapid rise yeast

Dough Directions: Mix dough in bread maker on dough setting, separate into 3 (or 2 if you want to make large ones) balls when finished. Use a floured rolling pin to roll out dough for 3 medium pizzas or 2 large.

Sauce

1 can of 30 oz whole peeled tomatoes
1 T red wine
½ t salt
¼ t fennel seed
A couple cloves of garlic
A small bunch of basil
A sprinkle of red pepper flakes

Sauce Directions: saute spices first for a minute or so, then add in tomatoes. Break apart with a fork or knife and add the other ingredients. Simmer until the sauce thickens.

Assembly:
Preheat oven to 450. For thick crust, generously oil a large cast iron skillet, sprinkle corn meal in bottom, spread out crust, then layer on shredded mozzarella, sauce, Canadian bacon (or ham) and pineapple and sprinkle more cheese. I sometimes add parmesan. For vegetarians sub the meat for fresh arugula, add after cooking.

For thin crust, I use a pizza stone, or cook on a grill. Cooking time will vary, start with 15 minutes.

A Night in Hawai'i

Banana Lilikoi Bread

3 to 4 ripe bananas, smashed (I use 4 apple bananas)
1/3 cup melted salted butter
3/4 cup light brown sugar (I use coconut sugar)
1 egg, beaten well
1 teaspoon vanilla
3 lilikoi (pulp & seeds too)
1 teaspoon baking soda
Pinch of salt
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon nutmeg
Pinch of ground cloves
1 1/2 cups flour

Preheat the oven to 350°F. With a wooden spoon, mix butter into the mashed bananas in a large mixing bowl. Mix in the sugar, egg, vanilla and lilikoi. In another bowl, mix the the flour, baking soda, salt and spices. Then fold the wet mixture into the dry.

Pour mixture into a buttered 4×8 inch loaf pan. Bake for 45 minutes to 55 minutes, or until a tester comes out clean. Cool before eating. Yum!