



READING GROUP GUIDE

COLD BLOOD, HOT SEA

a Mara Tusconi Mystery
by Charlene D'Avanzo

Introduction

When a colleague is killed aboard research vessel *Intrepid*, oceanographer Mara Tusconi believes it's no accident. Though pulled by the demands of her work and distracted by Ted McKnight, new hire at Maine Oceanographic, Mara delves into the circumstances surrounding the death.

Mara quickly becomes entangled in a scheme cooked up by powerful energy executives with much to lose if scientists like Mara and Ted continue their climate change research. The murky trail takes her from a lobster-lined research lab to a kayak bobbing in the Atlantic's icy waters. Mara's career—and life—is on the line, threatened by intrigue as big and dark as the ocean. *Cold Blood, Hot Sea* proceeds full speed ahead through the often cutthroat world of scientific research. This remarkable debut novel brims with ocean wonders, kayaking adventure, and plenty of twists, turns, and deep sea treachery.



"Sleuths will have to figure out who done it, but the real crime is the backdrop here: the endless heating of a fragile planet."

—BILL MCKIBBEN, author of *Eaarth*

"*Cold Blood, Hot Sea* is a cli-fi mystery that both entertains and bores deep into the heart of the issues. The author knows her science, too."

—DAN BLOOM, editor, *The Cli-Fi Report*

"An oceanographer fears she was the target of an accident at sea that kills one of her colleagues. Are climate change doubters at work?...[*Cold Blood, Hot Sea* combines] niche material about Maine life and oceanography."

—KIRKUS REVIEWS

Cold Blood, Hot Sea

Conversation Starters

- Mara and her friend and colleague Stan Huntley are targets for climate change doubters. Were you surprised to learn that some climate scientists have to deal with this type of harassment?
- Compared to men, female oceanographers are in the minority. How does the author present this issue?
- Many people know little about the day-to-day working world of research scientists. Were any issues, challenges, and realities that Mara, Harvey, and Ted dealt with surprising to you?
- The first line of Chapter 1 is, "My father once said, 'When you step aboard a ship you leave solid behind for that vast unseen.'" How is this theme developed?
- Who was your favorite character? Describe a scene or detail about that character you enjoyed.
- Mara displays many contradictory traits. What are some examples? Can you relate to any of them?
- Do you think Mara significantly changed by the end of the book?
- Throughout the book, several scientific phenomena are described in detail. Did you understand these phenomena? What do you think they added to the story?
- Did the author bring the Maine coast alive for you? How?
- The book is an example of "cli-fi" – climate fiction. How might writing a novel be especially challenging for cli-fi authors? How does this author handle these challenges?
- Mara's collaboration with her cousin Gordy and the local fishers is one example of scientists and citizens working together toward a common goal, specific to their coastal town. What kind of citizen-scientist collaboration might benefit your hometown?



About Charlene D'Avanzo

Marine ecologist and award-winning environmental educator Charlene D'Avanzo studied the New England coast for forty years. Today she uses mysteries to immerse readers in Maine waters' stunning beauty and grave threats. An avid sea kayaker, D'Avanzo lives in Yarmouth, Maine.

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Charlene is available to discuss *Cold Blood*, *Hot Sea* with reading groups in person or via Skype. For more information, email anne@torreyhouse.com.

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