



Circus in Winter

By Cathy Day (2005)



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Discussion questions taken from *Novelist*

1. Did Wallace Porter find peace in the circus or was there something else he was looking for with his purchase of the circus?
2. The full story of each character did not come out until it was perceived through the eyes of other characters. Does each character perceive himself as someone greater than other perceived him or is the opposite true?
3. In what ways were Earl the Boss Man affected by the circus? What impact did this connection make on his life?
4. Ollie is weaved throughout many of the stories and is a connecting strand between a number of very different people. What impact did Ollie's actions have on others around him?
5. Is the ending satisfying? If so, why? If not, why not...and how would you change it?
6. Is this a collection of stories or a novel? Why is the table of contents labeled a "Programme of Displays?"
7. As an explanation for buying a circus, Porter says "he'd been to see the elephant." What does he mean?
8. What else do elephants signify?
9. What other instances are there when characters are unable or unwilling to speak to each other about their feelings and thoughts?
10. Aside from the distorted history of Caesar the bull elephant, how do other stories address the representation of truth?
11. Are there places where Mildred is sympathetic?
12. Is the final story in the voice of the author?

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Author Bio:

(taken from www.cathyday.com)

Cathy Day's short story cycle, *The Circus in Winter*, was published by Harcourt in 2004. Day was born in Peru, Indiana, which was once winter quarters for several traveling circuses. Her great-great uncle, Henry Hoffman, was an elephant trainer, and another uncle, Bernie Wallace, was known as the fastest ticket seller in the county. *The Circus in Winter* was a finalist for both the Story Prize and the GLCA New Writers' Award; the book was also one of Amazon.com's "Best Books of 2004," a Barnes & Noble "Discover" pick, and an "Original Voices" selection at Borders. The recipient of a Bush Artist Fellowship and a New Jersey Arts Council Grant, Day earned her MFA at The University of Alabama and teaches in the graduate writing program at the University of Pittsburgh. I teach creative writing at Ball State University, and I'm working on Book #3 (which also has a "C" in it).

Read-Alikes:

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