

### **Discussion Questions for *The Blackbird Girls***

- 1.) How were Chernobyl workers lulled into a false sense of security?
- 2.) At the beginning of the book, what is the relationship like between Valentina Kaplan and Oksana Savchenko, and why?
- 3.) The story flips back and forth between the perspectives of Valentina, Oksana, and Grandma Rifka. What differences & similarities between these perspectives?
- 4.) Where is Valentina evacuated to by her mother, why is Oksana included, and what advice does Valentina's mother give to her daughter in dealing with Oksana?
- 5.) What is Rifka's secret that Valentina must not let out?
- 6.) What do we learn about Oksana's family's legacy of dysfunction, how has it affected Oksana? How do Rifka and Oksana aid each other in dealing with their troubled pasts?
- 7.) How does the relationship between Valentina and Oksana evolve over the length of the novel?
- 8.) From your personal point of view, was the book depressing, uplifting, both...and why?