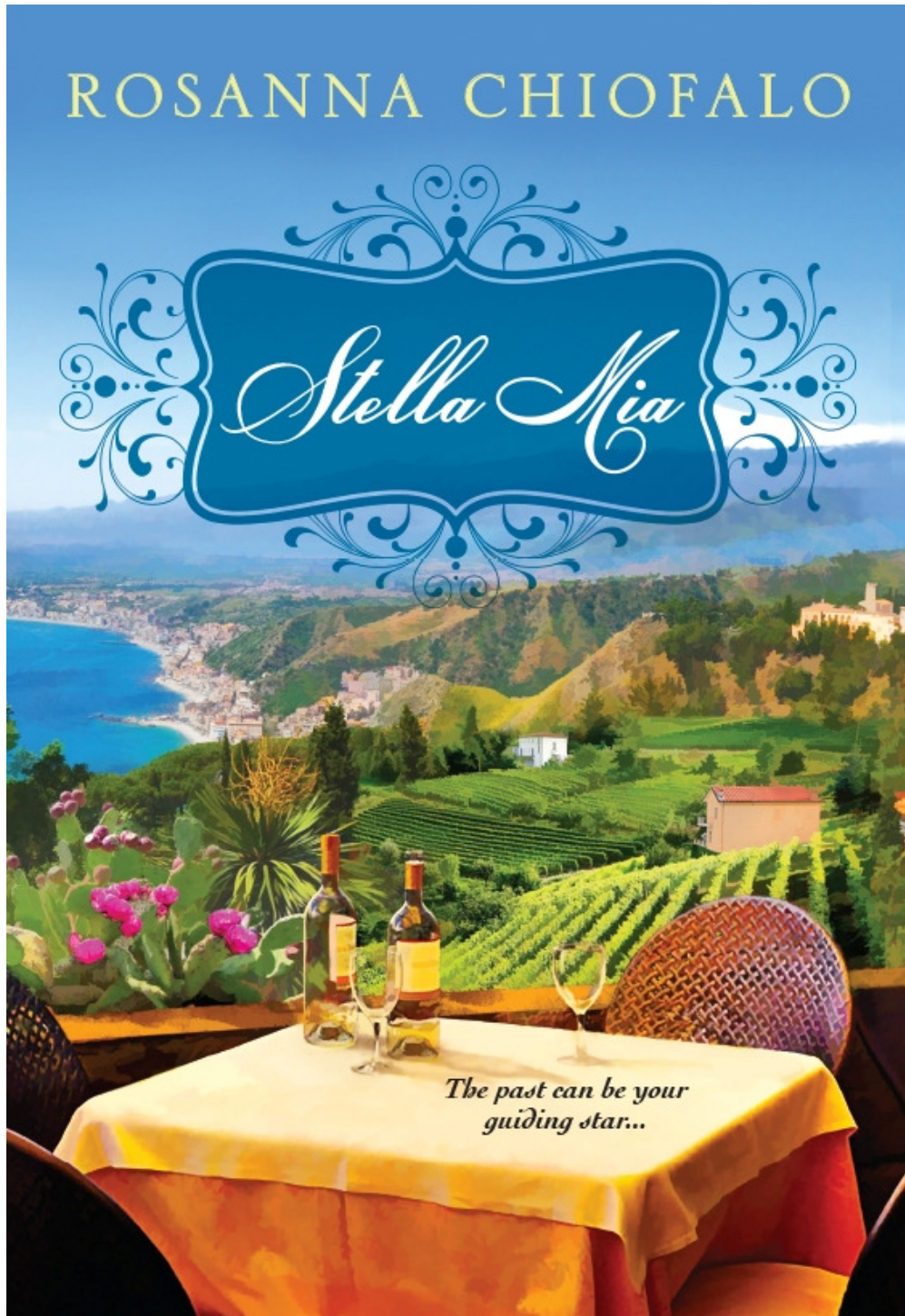


ROSANNA CHIOFALO

Stella Mia



*The past can be your
guiding star...*

READING GROUP GUIDE — STELLA MIA

- 1) After Sarina runs away from home, she is torn with guilt over having left her mother and siblings behind. Do you believe she made the right decision in leaving her mother and younger siblings behind?
- 2) Sarina goes from living an abusive, hard life in her father's house, to living an idyllic life in the coastal resort town of Taormina and on the magical Aeolian Islands, and her dream of singing becomes a reality. How do you think her life would have been different if she had remained at home and continued to be abused by her father?
- 3) Sometimes Sarina feels that Carlo is being idealistic when it comes to their romance since they are from opposite worlds; he is rich and has had a privileged life whereas Sarina has only known poverty and hardship. Discuss the pros and cons of being romantically involved with someone who's from a different social class.
- 4) In *Stella Mia*, the author goes against the long-held stereotype of gypsies as thieves and swindlers by depicting Maria and her family of gypsies as honest and hardworking yet she also shows how people immediately mistrusted them. Do you feel gypsies have been judged unfairly over time?
- 5) Sarina is intimidated by Carlo's father, Signore Conti, especially when she realizes he knows she has been seeing Carlo. Does Signore Conti intimidate Sarina so much because subconsciously he reminds her of her own stern father? Did she give in too easily to Signore Conti's demands that she leave Carlo?
- 6) Paulie tells Sarina that America is a "land of no tears." What do you think he meant by this? Do you feel that many immigrants believed this before immigrating to America? For Sarina, America instead proves to be a land full of tears. Discuss the possible scenarios of what could have become of Sarina if she didn't marry Paulie and move to America.
- 7) Why do you think Julia gave up on asking her father more about her mother, especially when she reached adulthood? Do you feel she was too harsh toward her father when she confronted him about Sarina's diary?
- 8) How has Paulie failed Julia? How has he done right by her? How has Sarina failed Julia? Has Sarina done right by Julia by staying out of her life for so long?
- 9) Are Sarina's motives for not returning to Julia valid? Do you think she deserves Julia's forgiveness?
- 10) Toward the end of *Stella Mia*, Julia has a dream in which she is experiencing a few of the major moments in Sarina's life. It is as if she has become Sarina until the end of the dream, when it is then just Julia watching her mother climb higher, and away from her, on the grapevine. Did you understand what the author was trying to achieve with this dream sequence?