

CANDLEWOOD

BOOK CLUB DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1) The book opens with Meg believing her conventional goals of “husband, children, home” will be simple to attain if she follows the rules. What are the obstacles to her goals?
- 2) The novel is primarily set in a once prosperous Victorian college town along the St. Croix River settled by Irish Catholics. How do the historical and cultural details shape the characters in this story?
- 3) Meg lives in three different apartments in the book. What does each reveal about her? How does she react when Father Andy visits? And when Father Darren is there?
- 4) What draws Meg and Father Andy to each other? What pulls them apart besides the rule against priests marrying? Would their relationship have lasted under other circumstances?
- 5) When Father Andy distances himself from Meg, she goes on retreat to pray about becoming a nun. Others might have decided to leave the Church for good. How does Meg retrieve new life from the ashes?
- 6) Why do you think Meg could reveal her deepest sorrows to Father Andy but not to any of the women in her life, not even Sister Loretta during her retreat at Christopher House?
- 7) Meg determines that time and distance are the best bets for healing her heart and finding her true north, so she moves to New York. What does she discover – about herself, others, and God?
- 8) At one point, Meg prays, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do. None of them do.” Describe her struggles with forgiveness – with her own father, with Father Darren, and Father Andy.
- 9) Father Darren is a danger to Meg. Have you been in a situation where you denied or questioned your instincts about a person?
- 10) The novel takes place in the 1970s. Did you learn anything new about historical movements of the time such as the sexual revolution, gay rights, or civil rights?
- 11) Meg begins as a teacher of children with developmental delays. Describe her journey to planning for a group home.
- 12) Were you satisfied with the ending? How has Meg changed? How has her faith changed? What do you think might happen to the book’s characters going forward?