

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ON KATHY STINSON'S YOUNG ADULT FICTION

WHAT HAPPENED TO IVY?

- David feels like an outsider within his own family and among kids at school. Does he seem like someone you'd want to be friends with? Why? Why not?
- Why do you think Hannah is spending time with David? How does Ivy's death change things? Or does it?
- What's the worst thing you've ever done to your brother or sister? Have you ever told anyone?
- How would you explain the different ways that the characters in this book react when they learn what really happened to Ivy? Do you think their reactions were realistic? Why? Why not?
- How do you personally feel about the decision David's father made?
- What do you think will happen in the days and months after this novel ends? Is what you think will happen the same as what you think should happen?

BECOMING RUBY

After reading *BECOMING RUBY*, discuss with a group of friends or classmates this question. If you were to move tomorrow to somewhere no one knew you, what name would you choose for yourself, and why?

FISH HOUSE SECRETS

If you think that Chad and Jill will write to each other, having exchanged addresses (p146 mass- market version, p116 quality paperback), write the first letter (or letters) that each of them will write. If you think their correspondence is likely to continue for some time, write the last letter(s) you think they will write, too. Had this story been written several years later than it was, the author would likely have had Chad and Jill exchanging e-mail addresses. If you would prefer to imagine e-mail messages between them, write those instead. Compare, among your friends or classmates, the different versions of correspondence Chad and Jill enjoy (as a result of your creations), and discuss what kind of impact you think e-mail vs snail-mail possibilities have on people and relationships in general.

ONE YEAR COMMENCING

- Discuss with a group of friends or classmates: What is the most difficult decision you have ever faced? What made it such a difficult decision? How and what did you decide? Were you happy with your decision, or not?
- Write two letters that Sam might write to Al at some point in the year she is living at her dad's. (Or pretend they have e-mail now and write two e-mail messages.) Write one that you think Al would be happy to receive, and another that she would be unhappy to receive.

Teacher Resource Guides are available from Thistle-down Press for:

- Fish House Secrets
- One Year Commencing

Visit www.kathystinson.com for more information about Kathy Stinson and her books for young people, or to find out how you can arrange a school or library reading, writing workshop for children or adults, or conference presentation!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR KATHY STINSON'S SHORT STORIES IN ANTHOLOGIES

"ZOGLER FROM LEVITRON"

(in *Amprosia*)

Do you agree with Terry Fallis' comment, that this story "packs an emotional punch"? If so, how did the author gently pull you into caring about Millie and her little girl? If not, what do you think stood in the way of your feeling for these characters?

"AGGIE'S TREE"

(in *Ten Stories High, Vol 14*)

What kind of picture do you get of Aggie as her past and her present situation get interwoven? Is there more than one way to interpret the ending of this story?

"BABY LOVE"

(in *Reality Imagined*)

- What do you think motivated Chelsea to keep her baby rather than placing her for adoption? What evidence in the text leads you to believe as you do?
- What kind of support systems do you think should (or shouldn't) be available to moms like Chelsea?

"READING LIBERIA"

(in *Truth Perceived*)

- Compare classrooms in Liberia with classrooms in your country.
- If only one of the five photos accompanying this story could be used, which one would you choose to keep, and why

"NORM'S GAME"

(in *Up All Night*)

- Discuss with a group of friends or classmates: Is there someone in your family or group of friends who seems to have the kind of influence over people that Norm has at Elaine's family cottage? What gives people like Norm their power? What can friends or family members do if someone like Norm starts using their power toward undesirable ends?
- Write a continuation of "NORM'S GAME". Show what happens after Elaine elects to be Gloria's badminton partner? (There is no one right way to predict this.)

"THE YEARBOOK"

(in *The Horrors: Terrifying Tales: Book One*)

What scares you more than anything? Write your own horror story that tackles it head on.

"THE COLLAPSE"

(in *The Horrors: Terrifying Tales: Book Two*)

After reading "The Collapse", read "The Fall of the House of Usher" by Edgar Allen Poe. Then read any of the classic horror stories by Edgar Allen Poe, Ray Bradbury, or W.W. Jacobs. Have fun retelling it as if it happened in a different time and place, like in your neighbourhood, this year.

"BABYSITTING HELEN"

(in *Takes*, in *Crossroads*, and in *Close-Ups*)

What's the hardest babysitting job you've ever had? Were you different in any way by the end of it? Try writing a story that shows (as opposed to just tells) what happened when you were babysitting and how you were changed. (Showing is like movie scenes, with characters speaking and acting. Telling is like newspaper reports that just impart information. Showing makes any story much livelier.)

“RESTRAINT”

(in *Ten Stories High*, Vol. 15)

Larry's ex-wife does not appear in this story, but through Larry's thoughts and his conversation with his grandfather, we learn something about her. Try writing one of the Larry-Loretta scenes referred to in "Restraint" from Loretta's point of view. Or write a story that shows what's going on in her life during the same hours that "Restraint" takes place.

Teacher Resource Guides are available from ThistleDown Press for:

- Up All Night
- Takes: Stories For Young Adults

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COLLECTION OF SHORT STORIES

101 WAYS TO DANCE

- Kathy Stinson believes that there are many ways for human beings to be different from each other – through gender, age, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, abilities and disabilities – but that what makes human beings alike is more profoundly important than any of these differences. Do you agree or disagree? Can you articulate why?
- Why do you think some people are attracted to the opposite sex, some to the same sex, and some to both? Is your community one where a person would feel comfortable being open with their sexual orientation?
- Kathy Stinson recalls her teen years as being an acutely sensual time. Can you find evidence of this in the sensual imagery in these stories (i.e. images evoking any of the five senses)?
- Which sensual image(s) stood out for you in that they helped you see, smell, feel, etc., what a character was experiencing?
- In the descriptions of landscape in some of the stories in this collection are examples of sensual imagery that seem to be suggestively male, or female. Even though Kathy Stinson didn't consciously set out to do this, she is pleased with how they feel integral to the "sexual anticipation" theme of the stories. Do you think the imagery enhances the stories or detracts from them?

“TALKING TO BROOKSVILLE”

Try talking non-stop without any response or encouragement from anyone else. How long can you go?

“BETWEEN MARS AND VENUS”

Were you rooting for Susan and Melina to get together? At what point(s) in the story might one of the girls have said or done something that would have changed its outcome?

“CHICKEN”

Nothing actually "happens" in this story, and yet some people think it's one of the most erotic stories they've read. How do you account for this?

“EVERYBODY LOVES A CLOWN”

- If you expected to die within the next year, what would you want the chance to experience? Do you have any kind of spiritual belief in what happens to you after you die? How does this
- differ from what other people you know believe?

“WAITING FOR BRIAN”

Do you think Jenn was right to do what she did for Aimee?

“ON FLAGPOLE HILL”

- "Sarah tried to swallow the tears burning in her throat. She wanted so much to believe there was another place close by, where pillowy hummocks caught light like magic." Is this really the reason for Sarah's tears? Why else might Sarah have felt like crying?
- Why start and end this story with the flagpole? How has Sarah changed between the beginning and the ending?

“DIVING”

Do you feel your name fits who you are? If so, why? If not, what name would you choose for yourself? Why?

“MICHELINE AND RENÉE”

- What do you think about the questions Erica wrestles with in this story?
- Why do you think some adults try to keep young people from reading certain books (perhaps even this one)? Visit www.freedomtoread.ca to find out more about books that someone has tried to prevent young people from reading.

“NIKA”

How do you account for the change in Nika's feelings about Brett?

“FERRIS WHEEL”

Do you think it’s possible to be "just friends" with someone you’re sexually attracted to, male or female, whatever your sexual orientation?

“GETTING LUCKY”

- Mark is the older brother of a character in one of Kathy Stinson’s novels. She once thought she might write a novel about him and his girlfriend Amy. Visit www.kathystinson.com/titles/fishhousesecrets_bg.htm to find out whose brother Mark is.
- If you were writing a novel about Mark and Amy, what scenes do you imagine being important? If you enjoy writing, why not try your hand at writing a chapter - near the beginning, end, or in the middle of the story. It doesn’t matter which; writers don’t always (and often don’t) write chapters in the order in which they eventually appear.

“101 WAYS TO DANCE”

- Can you list 101 songs that have the word "dance" in the lyrics?
- This story grew out of a writing exercise. Just for fun, do one of Miss Wortley’s writing assignments. Who knows, you might just get a story you like out of it, too.

“ITCHY”

How do you hope to be like – and unlike – either or both of your parents?

“ALL YOU NEED IS A SONG”

Many people would not consider Leslie and Simon "intelligent" in the way the word is usually used. Are there not, however, some ways in which they seem more intelligent than the (supposedly) more intelligent adults in the story? How do you account for this?

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR KATHY STINSON'S BIOGRAPHY OF CORNELIA OBERLANDER LOVE EVERY LEAF

- Have you ever met someone you wished you could know more about? Write a paragraph (or a sentence or a page) about what you know about them and another about what you wished you knew. See if you can find out what you're curious about - from that person or from others who know or knew them.
- What do you plan to be when you're an adult? Is there anything about the profession of landscape architecture that makes you think it might be for you? Anything (based on reading this book) that make you think it probably isn't?
- Look around your neighbourhood and find a space that's either unattractive, not being used for anything, or both. Try to imagine what the space might become. Can you imagine the steps that would need to be taken to make your vision a reality?

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