



READING GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The Wisdom of Stones

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1. Ben is a child of divorce. How might this have impacted his relationship with his mother?
2. In what ways did Ben's guilt over his mother's death inform Ben's later life?
3. When Ben's dad rejects him, his grandparents stepped in. In what ways were they more than adequate substitutes for the parents Ben lost? In what ways might they have fallen short?
4. When Grandma gets sick, Ben makes a deal with God. Is this something a child is likely to do? Why or why not?
5. It is easy to see the ways in which Grandma and Grandpa saved Ben. But how did he concurrently save them?
6. Brother Steve enters Ben's life at a pivotal point. What does Ben learn from Brother Steve about religion – and about life – that serves him later?
7. How do Grandma's and Grandpa's views on religion differ? In what ways might this have affected Ben?
8. The author does not fully explore Ben's feelings about his father. Knowing Ben, what would you expect those feelings to be?
9. Grandpa was sent away from home as a teenager, forced to make his way in the world. In what ways did this inform his character? And what role did it play in his understanding of and his relationship with Ben?
10. Two women play pivotal roles in Grandpa's life. Who would you say had the most impact and why?
11. How would you describe Pastor Hardy? What, if anything, do you feel the author has not told us about him?
12. In what ways are Pastor Hardy and Grandpa's roles in Ben's life similar? How are they dissimilar?
13. We clearly see the benefit of Grandpa's stories for Ben. But in what ways might the telling of them be of benefit to Grandpa?
14. What do Grandpa's hats tell you about him?
15. As we come through adolescence to adulthood, we all have things about ourselves with which we grapple. What did you grapple with? And how did you find acceptance or resolution?



16. Ben's initial sexual encounters are uncomfortable and self-conscious. How is that different – or similar – to the initial sexual encounters of most young people?
17. What does Ben learn from the stories about Ruby J? What does Ben learn from Viola?
18. What made the scholarship particularly important to Ben? Faced with losing a scholarship and this opportunity, what would you have done if you were in Ben's shoes?
19. By the end of the book, how would you describe Ben and Grandpa's relationship? In what ways did it change from the beginning of the book? In what ways did it stay the same?
20. The Wisdom of Stones is a multi-layered book. What would you say is its primary theme?
21. How would you describe Ben at the end of the book? What would you project is next for him?