Book Club Questions

Remy’s father justifies taking his five-year-old son to live in the wilderness by saying that in their new home they’ll have the most important thing: freedom. Do you believe freedom is truly the most important thing?

What evidence do you think Remy’s father based the conflagration—when civilization burns itself to the ground—on? To what extent do you think he had his son’s best interests at heart?

Anne’s father left her when she was a young girl and her mother blamed her and her siblings for being “too many and too much.” In what ways did Anne internalize this rejection and allow it to affect her adult life?

After Remy moves in with Anne and her family, he is very interested in watching the news to learn if the world is “regular,” or if it’s the way his father thought it was. Based on what he sees, how do you think a child would interpret today’s world after being isolated for so long?

Remy’s worst fear is that the world is falling apart but that everyone is keeping it from him. Anne and her family have to constantly weigh how much to tell Remy, while still staying honest so he’ll trust them. How would you navigate a precarious situation like this in your own life?

The theme of fear-driven behavior runs throughout the book. At one point Anne says, “. . . the truth is, ‘I’m just a human, among billions of other humans, and I’m alive, and it’s really hard being alive, and I don’t want to admit it, because nobody around me is admitting it, and most of the time I don’t know what I’m doing, and I’m scared.’” Does this statement resonate with you?

At first, Remy is deathly afraid of Anne’s dogs, but as time moves on Anne finds the dogs happily sleeping on his bed with him. What is the commonality between the abandoned children and the abandoned dogs that make up this family?

Anne, Chris, and the other siblings go with Remy to bring his father’s ashes back to the homestead. Remy is conflicted over his feelings about his father and says, “If I know he was wrong, and I know what he did was a bad thing for me, does that mean I’m not supposed to love him and be sad he died?” Have you ever lost someone in your life and struggled with what to feel? How did you reconcile it?

At the end of the book, Anne and Miri discuss how to keep going when facing the overwhelming challenges in today’s world. Miri suggests, “This is something you do with your eyes open. You look at the world, see it for exactly what it is, and then make this conscious choice to be part of it.” Do you agree with her philosophy?