

# Evening News

by Marly Swick

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## About the Book

*It must seem odd to him how you got punished for the minor infractions. A "time out" for talking back. No popsicle for coming home late. No TV for breaking your sister's Busy Box. But for the major crimes, there was no punishment. How much "time out" for shooting your little sister?*

Giselle thought she finally had it all together. She'd escaped from the mid-West to temperate Southern California with her young son Teddy. She'd married Dan Trias, who seemed the perfect man for her: handsome, literate, articulate. They had a baby, and the four of them became a family, inviolable. Or so she'd thought.

When one false move triggers a terrible accident, they become a family divided. Dan collapses in the face of the crisis, and Giselle is pulled between her grieving husband and her shocked son. And as she struggles to piece her family back together, she has to teach herself the hardest lesson a mother can learn: How to forgive your child the unforgivable.

Searing and illuminating--and, finally, redemptive--**Evening News** takes an unflinching look at the fragile relationships in step-families, the nature of the love between parents and children, and what happens when the two collide.

## Discussion Guide

1. Giselle has difficulty accepting the idea of a "blameless" accident. Do you think there is such a thing? Is Teddy completely blameless or does the fact that his finger pulled the trigger make him accountable?
2. Parents are often said to have unconditional love for their children. Do you think it is possible for someone to love another person unconditionally?
3. Can a stepparent love a stepchild as much as a biological parent can? Is there truth to the saying that "blood is thicker

than water?"

4. Can you understand Dan's behavior toward Teddy? Given the circumstances, do you think Dan should have been able to pull himself together and to treat Teddy with more sympathy, or do you think his behavior is justified?
5. Giselle and Dan dealt with their grief in very different ways. Do you think this is because women and men deal with grief differently or because, as Teddy's mother, Giselle didn't have the option of allowing her grief to overtake her life?
6. Ed and Dan are very different, both as individuals and in their relationships with Giselle. Why did Giselle leave Ed? What did she find in Dan that Ed had lacked? Do you think either man was right for her?
7. Dan teaches a class in which his assignments are "aimed at exploring . . . personal experience in order to see how [his students] arrived at their opinions and values," yet, after Trina's death, he is unable to communicate or articulate his feelings. Discuss.
8. As you were reading, how did you think the book would end? Did you think Giselle would end up with one of the two men in her life?
9. Why is this book titled **Evening News**? What role does the media play in the story?
10. In considering the ending, do you think Dan, Giselle, or Teddy ever find peace? How has Trina's death affected their career paths and personal relationships? How do you envision Teddy's future?

## Author Bio

Marly Swick has received an NEA fellowship, a James Michener Award, an O. Henry Award, and the Iowa Short Fiction Award. Her highly praised books include the novel *Paper Wings* and two story collections, **The Summer Before the Summer of Love** and **Monogamy**.

## Critical Praise

"A book that lingers in the mind and heart."

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