

# Seven Loves: A Novel

by Valerie Trueblood

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## About the Book

Who most deeply affects our lives? Sometimes it is those who touch us briefly, even unexpectedly. For May Nilsson, these include the lover she takes in her forties; the handsome, troubled young rebel she is determined to rescue; the police officer who inadvertently plays a major role in her greatest catastrophe.

Moving back and forth in time, from May's childhood to her eighth decade, **SEVEN LOVES** weaves together the strands of an ordinary life made extraordinary by the complex passions that drive it.

## Discussion Guide

1. As **Seven Loves** moves back and forth in time, a full picture of May Nilsson's life comes to light. What does the author accomplish by not telling May's story in chronological order? Were there periods in May's life that you connected with more than others? If so, which ones?
2. May never disavows her love for Cole, even when she sees Nathanael as her soul mate. How do you think her marriage survived the affair? What do you think transpired between May and Cole during the long time lapse between chapters two and three?
3. Why was May and her family slow to recognize Nick's problems with drugs and the law? Leah believes that Nick is the "secretly, deeply favored" child (page 105). Do you think his beloved status within the family made it easier for them to ignore his problems?
4. May's stepmother once said of May's childhood, "I don't think you had regular meals. And no sleep, and egged on at home to make it hard for yourself in the schoolyard. . . . You made an outcast of yourself. You lost your little friends" (page 216). If May's mother had lived, do you think May's life would have continued on this seemingly difficult path?

What positive traits could she have learned from her mother had they had more time together?

5. During a conversation with Leah, May tells her friend, "You didn't know me when I was young and wild" (page 64). Do you think May's personality mellowed or changed considerably as she aged, or did you find that her personality remained consistent throughout **Seven Loves**, no matter her age?

6. Valerie Trueblood once said in an interview that she's a bit anti-plot, because of the "contained arc: the beginning, the complication, and the resolution. Novels like that, I just don't believe. It's hard for me to see that things could really ever be tied up with a resolution." Do you agree? Did the ending of **Seven Loves** leave you satisfied?

7. Although this is not a historical novel, May's life spans much of the twentieth century, and real-life events serve as the backdrop to May's personal dramas. To what extent are politics important to May and to the directions that her life takes? Or do you feel that the personal overshadows the political in **Seven Loves**?

## Author Bio

Valerie Trueblood is a contributing editor to *The American Poetry Review*, and her essays, articles, and poetry have appeared in *One Story*, *The Northwest Review*, *The Iowa Review*, *The Seattle Times*, and *Seattle Weekly*, among others. She lives in Seattle.

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