ReadingGroupGuides
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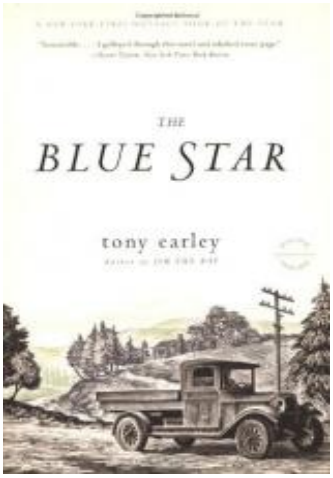
The Blue Star

by Tony Earley



About the Book

Seven years ago, readers everywhere fell in love with Jim Glass, the precocious ten-year-old at the heart of Tony Earley's bestseller **Jim the Boy**. Now a teenager, Jim returns in another tender and wise story of young love on the eve of World War Two.

Jim Glass has fallen in love, as only a teenage boy can fall in love, with his classmate Chrissie Steppe. Unfortunately, Chrissie is Bucky Bucklaw's girlfriend, and Bucky has joined the Navy on the eve of war. Jim vows to win Chrissie's heart in his absence, but the war makes high school less than a safe haven, and gives a young man's emotions a grown man's gravity. With the uncanny insight into the well-intentioned heart that made **Jim the Boy** a favorite novel for thousands of readers, Tony Earley has fashioned another nuanced and unforgettable portrait of America in another time --- making it again even realer than our own day.

This is a timeless and moving story of discovery, loss and growing up, proving why Tony Earley's writing "radiates with a largeness of heart" (*Esquire*).

Discussion Guide

1. At the beginning of **The Blue Star** it is revealed that Jim?s uncle Zeno once experienced a failed romance with Nancy, the mother of Chrissie, with whom Jim has now fallen in love. How does this shared history influence Jim and Chrissie?s relationship?

2. The book?s title is derived from a banner displayed in the family house of those actively serving military duty. How does Bucky Bucklaw?s departure for the navy on the eve of World War II affect Jim?s feelings for Chrissie? How does it affect Jim?s feelings about himself?

3. Even though Chrissie is engaged to Bucky and Norma is eager to be Jim?s bride, Jim refuses to consider spending his life with anyone other than Chrissie. What do you think his motivation is? Is it true love?

4. Discuss Jim?s decision to enlist in the army at the end of the novel. Were you surprised? Do you think Jim?s decision was influenced by his uncle Zeno?s refusal to enlist in World War I?

5. The Blue Star is very much a story about becoming an adult, and at one point near the end of the novel Jim thinks to himself that ?he had to be the worst adult on God?s green earth? (page 262). Do you think this is a fair assessment? Why do you think Jim is so hard on himself?

6. Discuss the impact on Jim?s life of the death of his father so soon after Jim was born. How do you think this has shaped Jim as he becomes an adult?

7. Like Tony Earley?s previous novel, **Jim the Boy**, this story centers around the character of Jim Glass. Was Jim your favorite character in the novel? If not, who, and why?

8. What do you think the future holds for Jim, Chrissie, Norma, and Dennis Deane? How will Jim and Chrissie?s final encounter affect their futures? Will Norma move on now that Jim has left Aliceville? And how will Dennis Deane cope with parenthood? What would you like to see happen to each of these characters?

Author Bio

Tony Earley was selected by Granta as one of today?s best young writers, the New Yorker featured him in its best young fiction writers issue, and the New York Times called his first novel, JIM THE BOY,"a radiant, knowing, pitch-perfect parable of childhood." He is also the author of a collection of short stories, HERE WE ARE IN PARADISE. He teaches writing at Vanderbilt University.

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