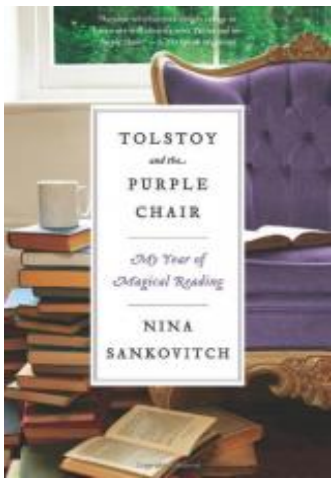
Tolstoy and the Purple Chair: My Year of Magical Reading

by Nina Sankovitch



About the Book

Catalyzed by the loss of her sister, a mother of four spends one year savoring a great book every day, from Thomas Pynchon to Nora Ephron and beyond. In the tradition of Gretchen Rubin?s **The Happiness Project** and Joan Dideon?s **A Year of Magical Thinking**, Nina Sankovitch?s soul-baring and literary-minded memoir is a chronicle of loss, hope, and redemption. Nina ultimately turns to reading as therapy and through her journey illuminates the power of books to help us reclaim our lives.

Discussion Guide

1. One of Nina?s favorite books from childhood, **The Most Beautiful Woman in the World**, can still bring tears to her eyes when she reads it today. What books did you love as a child that can still elicit strong emotions in you today?

2. After losing her sister to cancer, Nina Sankovitch reacted by trying to live a life full of activities: ?*I was going to live double if my sister couldn?t live at all*.? It is only after three years of incessant activity, a life ?*lived at increasing speed*?, that she realizes a ?*full life*? does not mean full of scheduled commitments, planned activities, and constant engagement. How do you define a ?*full life*?? How has that definition changed over the years of your life, and what events from your life led you to change that definition?

3. In your own experiences of reading, how has a book allowed you to relive a difficult period in your life or in world history, and learn from that event? Do you believe, as Nina does, that experiences can lead to learning and improved chances for mankind?

4. In the book Nina writes: ?*it is a gift we humans have, to hold onto beauty felt in a moment for a lifetime*.? What does Nina mean by ?*beauty*?? What are some examples from your own life- ?*moments of beauty*? that you will never forget?

5. Nina wants to recover for her children their ?*palmy days*? of a carefree childhood. Children come to their awareness of death at various ages and in various ways. How do you think a child is affected by an early experience of the death of a close relative? What was your first experience with death and how did you react? Did it change your outlook on life?

6. Nina explores the pitfalls of lending and borrowing books: ?*the giver of the book is not exactly ripping open her soul for a free look, but when she hands over the book with the comment that it is one of her favorites, such an admission is very close to the baring of the soul.*? Have you ever received a book as a present that you would never have chosen for yourself? Did you read the book? What did you discover in your reading?

7. For Nina, books are an escape to other places in time and around the world. What kind of escape do you look for in books? Do you prefer to visit exotic places or to return to old, familiar places you have not been to for awhile?

8. Nina finds comfort in discerning the unbreakable connection that exists between her and her sister: ?*Her place in my life is defined by everything she did, everything she showed me, and the way she led me to new ideas.* ? How would you define the connections that bind you to specific members of your family and to each of your close friends? How do such connections survive through the years and even through absence and loss? What role does memory play? Are there certain books that bind you to a certain person or place?

Author Bio

Nina Sankovitch launched ReadAllDay.org in 2008, and at the end of her year of reading, she was profiled in the *New York Times*. She continues to review books on ReadAllDay.org and for the *Huffington Post*. She lives in Connecticut with her husband and four sons.

Tolstoy and the Purple Chair: My Year of Magical Reading

by Nina Sankovitch

Publication Date: June 19, 2012
Genres: Nonfiction
Paperback: 256 pages
Publisher: Harper Perennial
ISBN-10: 0061999857
ISBN-13: 9780061999857