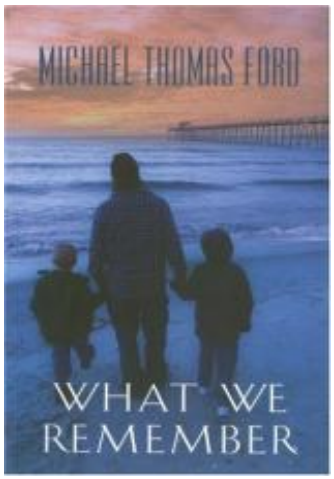
What We Remember

by Michael Thomas Ford



About the Book

What We Remember paints a compelling, thought-provoking portrait of a family as ordinary, as unique, as comforting and strange as our own. With unerring insight and candor, Michael Thomas Ford explores the complex ties --- between fathers and sons, brothers and sisters, mother and child --- that we may strive to leave behind but are compelled to carry with us, revealing how little we can ever know with certainty?especially about those closest to us.

Award winning author, Michael Thomas Ford's ambitious new novel will appeal to his core readership, but also fans of Julia Glass, Chris Bohjalian and Jodi Picoult.

Discussion Guide

1. The novel's chapters switch back and forth between the events of 1991 and the events of 1982/83. Did you find the transitions jarring, or has the author crafted them in such a way that the story flows smoothly?

2. Some scenes in the book are shown from more than one character's perspective. Often what you might believe at one point in the novel changes when you see the same scene from another perspective later on. How did this affect your reading experience? Were there any instances where you were bothered that something you believed to be true turned out not to be?

3. The action in the book often switches back and forth between the world of adults and the world of children. How do these two worlds mirror one another?

4. Billy McCloud at first seems to be the least reliable character in the novel, but as the story unfolds he in many ways proves to be the most reliable. Did your opinion of Billy change during the reading of the novel?

5. Nancy Derry arguably suffers more than any character in the book. Yet she could have prevented many of the tragic events in her life by telling the truth. Do you think she made the right choices regarding Becky, her pregnancy, and her role in Dan's death? Can her failure to do so be excused by her youth? Do you see her as a victim or as a villain?

6. Do you think Ada McCloud made the right choice in hiding the alleged confession by her husband? How do you think things might have turned out had she given the letter to the police?

7. Charly enters the story as an outsider coming into a close-knit family and a close-knit community. How does this help and/or hinder her investigation? In terms of the structure of the novel, how does she act as a literary device?

8. How do you think the characters' lives would have turned out had Dan McCloud's body not been found? It could be argued that some characters (particularly Billy and Nancy) are "saved" by the revelations, while other characters (especially Celeste and potentially Becky) have their lives turned upside down. Would it have been better if all of the secrets had remained buried?

9. Who did you first think the killer was, and why? Did your guess change as you read the novel? Were you at all surprised when the killer's identity was revealed?

10. The author has said that the book was inspired by an incident in which he and his sister remembered the same event from their childhood in very different ways. Have you ever experienced this? How did it make you feel to realize that what we think we remember very clearly might not be the truth?

11. How would you describe the novel? Does it fit the traditional definition of a mystery?

12. How is this novel similar to and different from Ford's previous books?

Author Bio

Michael Thomas Ford is the author of more than forty books. He is best known for his essay collections and the first two won back-to-back Lambda Literary Awards for best humor book, plus four of his essay collections have topped bestseller lists across the country. He currently lives in San Francisco, California.

Critical Praise

"Ford knows how to draw in a reader."

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