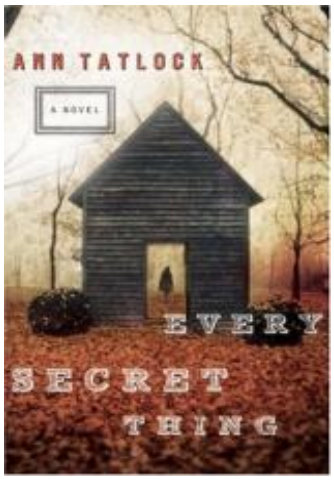
Every Secret Thing

by Ann Tatlock



About the Book

When Elizabeth Gunnar accepts a job as an English teacher at the school she attended as a girl, she finds herself returning to more than a place. Seaton Preparatory holds so many memories -- of a beloved teacher who left under mysterious circumstances, of a young woman searching for her place in the world, of a former love.

Once there, Elizabeth finds unexpected challenges -- and challenging people. She meets Satchel Queen, a troubled student whose writing assignments draw her attention. And Ray Schmidt is a childhood friend her heart has never forgotten.

As new friendships form and the past is brought to light, Elizabeth finds renewing from a most unexpected source.

Discussion Guide

1. "When it comes to Delaware, you don't really hear much of anything?the state itself is not so different from most of us?Very few people know that you exist, or that I exist?." (Prologue). Have you ever felt this way about your existence? What situations brought about these feelings? What does Scripture say about our being known by God? Consider Psalm 139: 1-6; 13-18 and Matthew 10:29-31.

2. The concept "moments of being" is a continuous thread in Beth's experience in Every Secret Thing. Describe the concept from her point of view. Can you identify with her experience? If so, how?

3. There are many teens today who are seemingly "lost" and "invisible" just as Satchel seemed to be. What factors in our world do you think contribute toward their feelings of isolation and despair?

4. "School was a testing ground, and it was here my worth as a person would be determined," remembers Beth in

Chapter 7. How would you encourage Beth if you were discussing this with her as a teenager?

5. When she heard the bells in the basilica (Chapter 17), it was both a revelation and a turning point in Beth's life. What was the essence of this experience? Have you ever had a similar experience?

6. As high school students, Beth and her friends felt betrayed by their beloved teacher's "suicide." Have you ever been devastated by a person you trusted? How did you react? How does it affect you today?

7. What were the "lesser gods" in Beth's life that are shown throughout the story? What are some "lesser gods" in your own life? What should be your response to these things? Read Exodus 20:1-4 and Act 17:29-31.

8. At the end of Chapter 33 Satchel and Beth discuss whether or not it is worthwhile to love in spite of pain. Read the passage again and describe the mindset behind each character. Have you ever had either of these two perspectives?

9. After reading Satchel?s essay "My Favorite Thing to Do"(Chapter 41), Beth comments, "When a person considers her place in this wide world, she begins to drown." Think of several Scripture passages that could encourage a person contemplating the immensity of the universe and his or her place in the world.

10. Trace the concept of love throughout Every Secret Thing. Bring out conversations in the book that discuss this concept. Finally, form a one-sentence conclusion that describes what you think the novel is trying to portray about love.

11. In Satchel's essay "My Dream Job" (Chapter 47) she talks about the "blood-cleaning" machine she would like to create. As you think about Satchel's desire to bring joy and happiness to people, consider the ultimate cleansing of blood. Read Mark 14:12-25 and contemplate these verses in relation to Satchel's dream.

12. Look at the conversation that Beth and her dad had about the book of Hosea in Chapter 51. What was her dad actually trying to talk to her about when she thought he was trying to discuss her situation with Ray?

13. At the end of Chapter 56 Beth asks herself, "What had happened to the God I had known, the one who had come to me in those moments of being?" What do you think is the answer to her question? Support your answer with Scripture.

14. By chapter 67 Beth still did not fully trust Mr. Dutton. Do you think he earned her complete trust by the end of the story? If so, how? If not, why?

15. Beth closes her story with some final words to the reader: "I want you to know that if you stop and listen to the moments, you might realize that He is in them, calling your name?." As you contemplate this and other lessons learned by the characters in this book, what impact could you let them have on your own circumstances?

Author Bio

Ann Tatlock is the author of the Christy Award-winning novel ALL THE WAY HOME. She has also won the Midwest Independent Publishers Association "Book of the Year" in fiction for both ALL THE WAY HOME and I'LL WATCH

THE MOON. Her novel THINGS WE ONCE HELD DEAR received a starred review from *Library Journal* and *Publishers Weekly* calls her "one of Christian fiction's better wordsmiths, and her lovely prose reminds readers why it is a joy to savor her stories." Ann lives with her husband and daughter in Asheville, North Carolina. Visit www.anntatlock.com.

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Publication Date: October 1, 2007
Genres: Christian, Fiction
Paperback: 368 pages
Publisher: Bethany House
ISBN-10: 0764200054
ISBN-13: 9780764200052