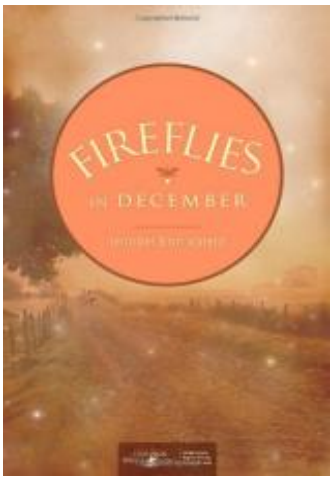
ReadingGroupGuides
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Fireflies in December

by Jennifer Erin Valent



About the Book

Jessilyn Lassiter never knew that hatred could lurk in the human heart until the summer of 1932 when she turned 13. When her best friend, Gemma, loses her parents in a tragic fire, Jessilyn's father vows to care for her as one of his own, despite the fact that Gemma is black and prejudice is prevalent in their southern Virginia town. Violence springs up as a ragtag band of Ku Klux Klan members unite and decide to take matters into their own hands. As tensions mount in the small community, loyalties are tested and Jessilyn is forced to say good-bye to the carefree days of her youth. **Fireflies in December** is the 2007 winner of the Christian Writers Guild's Operation First Novel contest.

Discussion Guide

1. The people of Calloway seemed to have a problem with Jessilyn and Gemma?s friendship primarily after Gemma came to live with the Lassiters. What made the difference in their minds? Could you relate to Sadie?s mixed emotions about keeping Gemma?

2. Take a walk in Gemma?s shoes. How would you cope with her combination of loss, fear, and feeling out of place?

3. Explore the sisterhood between Jessilyn and Gemma. In what ways did tragedy make their bond stronger?

4. How do the Lassiters personify the title of the book, and how can we do the same? Why is it so necessary in our contemporary culture to stand up for what is right and true?

5. Despite the closeness of her family, Jessilyn feels alone in her guilt over Cy Fuller and in her struggle with Walt Blevins. Why? How would a relationship with Jesus Christ have eased Jessilyn?s burden of loneliness?

6. How does Jessilyn?s persistent questioning of her faith point to God?s sense of timing and purpose in all things?

7. In what ways does Luke?s presence provide a stabilizing force for Jessilyn?

8. Do you think Jessilyn and Luke are drawn together by being the only nonbelievers in their tight little circle?

9. How did Miss Cleta?s courage inspire the girls? How did it inspire you?

10. How did Otis Tinker?s belief in his ?cause? enable him to lead a double life? Do you feel that we?re capable of letting this sort of deception creep into our own lives?

11. How do the ?band of angels? bringing help to the devastated Lassiter farm show that even the smallest acts of selflessness can make a strong impact?

12. How did the Lord use the tragedy and fear of the summer of 1932 to teach Jessilyn and to bring the characters together?

Author Bio

Jennifer Erin Valent is the 2007 winner of the Christian Writers Guild?s Operation First Novel contest. A lifelong resident of the South, her surroundings help to color the scenes and characters she writes. In fact, the childhood memory of a dilapidated Ku Klux Klan billboard inspired her portrayal of Depression-era racial prejudice in FIREFLIES IN DECEMBER.

She has spent the past fifteen years working as a nanny and has dabbled in freelance, writing articles for various Christian women?s magazines. She still resides in her hometown of Richmond, Virginia. Visit her Web site at www.jennifervalent.com.

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