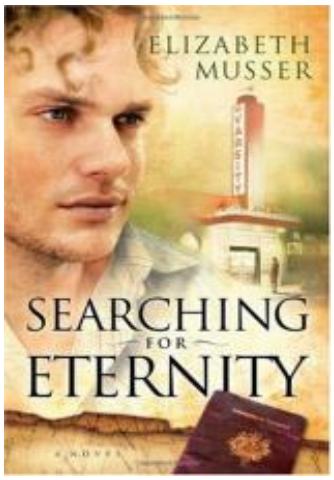
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Searching for Eternity

by Elizabeth Musser



About the Book

A youth yanked out of the only life he?s known to live on the other side of the Atlantic with a grandmother he's never seen before...A mother who shrugs off her son's anguish with breezy assurances like, "You'll love America, Emile."...A father's sudden disappearance from his son's life with no explanation or even a good-bye...

French-born Emile de Bonnery lands in the strange environment of 1960s Atlanta with decidedly mixed emotions. Some memories make Emile want to believe the best of his father. Others cause him to fear the worst. Does his mother know more than she's willing to tell?

Determined to learn the truth, Emile finds an ally and friend --- who seems to be hiding secrets of her own. Together they search for answers?and what they find changes everything.

Discussion Guide

1. What is Emile really searching for in this novel?

2. What do the treasures --- odd collection of items used by Emile's father in the war, then later given to his son --- symbolize to Emile? Have you ever received a strange gift that came to symbolize something entirely different?

3. Emile is forced to adapt to a completely new and foreign culture without warning. Have you ever experienced culture shock in any form? If so, did this make you more sensitive to foreigners trying to adapt to our culture? In regards to responses to culture shock, which character can you most identify with? Emile, Janie, Grandma Bridgeman, Ace, Eternity, Griffin? Why?

4. Who is the strongest character in the novel and why? Who is a stabilizing force?

5. Discuss the image of a safe room. Do you have a safe room? If so, describe your ideal safe room.

6. As a young adolescent, Emile longs for a father figure --- someone to teach him how to be a man. Does he find one? Which scenes in the novel best portray his struggle toward maturity? Does he ultimately succeed?

7. Is Jean-Baptiste de Bonnery ultimately a coward, a hero, a man possessed by revenge, or someone else?

8. Discuss the theme of sacrifice in the novel. Who gives up the most?

9. At the beginning of the novel, Eternity's goal is to protect her family. Discuss the problems surrounding children who are forced to take on the role of adults. What does Eternity learn about control?

10. Emile struggles to forgive his father throughout the novel, at times succeeding. However, when Jean-Baptiste finally shows up after 23 years of absence, Emile's old feelings of betrayal and hate resurface. Have you ever experienced forgiving someone, yet still had to deal with intense feelings for years afterwards? What ultimately helped Emile? You?

11. Even though Klaus Barbie never admitted his guilt or showed any remorse, were the French resistants and the Jews avenged by his condemnation? What did Barbie's trial allow for France?

12. Think about Eternity Jones, the circumstances surrounding why she was given her first name and the revelation of her life in the novel. In light of these thoughts, consider this rendering of Genesis 50:20: "What my father meant for bad, God meant for good..." How does Eternity live up to her very big name? How does the curse become a blessing?

13. Discuss the themes of eternity and time. What do Emile and Eternity learn about the concept of time through the course of the novel? Discuss the symbolism in the title.

Author Bio

Elizabeth Musser?s highly acclaimed novels, including TWO CROSSES, TWO TESTAMENTS, THE SWAN HOUSE and THE DWELLING PLACE, have been translated into multiple languages and enjoyed bestseller status worldwide. A Georgia native, she now lives in Lyon, France, with her husband where they have served as missionaries with International Teams for over 20 years.

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