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Thank You for All Things

by Sandra Kring



About the Book

A poignant novel from a master storyteller, **Thank You for All Things** raises meaningful questions about family ties and the power of forgiveness. Gifted with sharp minds, eleven-year-old twins Lucy and Milo understand the world around them better than most adults do. Yet one subject is off-limits: their missing father. Whenever Lucy bravely raises the question with her mother, Tess, it gets brushed aside. When Tess?s own father becomes gravely ill, she and her newly ?New Age? mother travel with the children to rural Wisconsin to care for him. Lucy hopes that immersing herself in her mother?s past will also unlock clues to her own fragmented history. Their extended stay with a dying, once dangerously volatile man leads to surprising revelations. As bygone secrets are revealed, Lucy learns the truth about her parents --- and the truth about the human capacity for love.

Discussion Guide

1. How does the title, **Thank You for All Things**, apply to various characters in the novel? Which characters have the most gratitude? Who seems to have little to be thankful for but manages to feel appreciative nonetheless? How are gratitude and forgiveness linked?

2. What was the effect of reading the storyline through Lucy?s eyes? How would it have been different if Milo had done the narrating?

3. Are family secrets always damaging? Did Milo and Lucy benefit from having the truth kept from them? Who else was Tess protecting by remaining silent about her past?

4. In chapter twelve, Marie says that going home helps her remember who she is. Lucy enjoys hearing this. What does the ?homecoming? to Wisconsin teach her about who she is? What do her fantasies of her father, including the theory that Scott Hamilton is her dad, indicate about her perception of herself?

5. Some of the novel?s most important revelations are reported through journal entries. What did Tess communicate to herself when writing about her life? Why was it difficult for her to be open with her family about her emotional pain?

6. What kept Tess from feeling completely comfortable with Peter? Why was she hesitant to trust him?

7. What cycles of abuse occurred in the McGowan family? How did others respond to the damage inflicted by it? What gave Oma/Lillian the strength to return to Wisconsin?

8. What memories does Tess revive by seeing Mitzi? How does Mitzi?s experience with pregnancy affect her role in Tess?s life? Discuss one of your own lifelong friendships and the ways that friendship has changed over time.

9. What fueled the rage and shame that made Tess?s father so dangerous? How did dementia transform him? Which aspects of his life and personality endured despite dementia?

10. Milo and Lucy possess exceptional brain power. Are they equally advanced in matters of the heart? What benefits and problems does their mental prowess bring to their childhood?

11. How does Tess?s relationship with Clay compare to Milo and Lucy?s? What determines whether siblings will remain close or become estranged?

12. How did you react to the revelations about Howard? What had you predicted for the truth about Lucy and Milo?s father?

13. Discuss the homecomings that have made a significant impact on your life.

14. Sandra Kring grew up in an abusive home and has run support groups and workshops for adult survivors of trauma. What skills and sensitivities does her past bring to her life as a fiction writer, in this book as well as her previous novels, **Carry Me Home** and **The Book of Bright Ideas**?

Author Bio

SANDRA KRING lives in the north woods of Wisconsin. She runs support groups and workshops for adult survivors of trauma. Her debut novel, Carry Me Home, was a Book Sense Notable pick and a 2005 Midwest Booksellers' Choice Award nominee.

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