

Reader's Guide

- 1.** Julia's Aunt Simone says that "fate is what makes you spill your coffee and wipe your nose and what makes dust settle in the creases of your curtains." But at Enhancement Press, where Julia works, people say that, "Everything that happens to us is something we first created in our minds." Which does Julia end up believing? Which do you believe?
- 2.** Does Julia forgive Bill for leaving? Does Steven forgive Julia? Should they be forgiven? Can we repair the injuries of the past?
- 3.** What does Julia mean when she says that her father "put on his boots and walked out of the house rather than tell me a single sad story"? (p. 299) Does this explain why he left Justina and his sons?
- 4.** Why does Carolina go to Mexico? What is the symbolism, and the allure, of Latin America in the novel?
- 5.** Irma dies in a swimming pool and Steven almost does, but swimming also brings both Irma and Julia back to life. What purpose does water serve in the book? Why do so many things in the book seem to happen in the water?
- 6.** It's Lisa who comes up with the idea of using the wishing box to bring about Bill's return. What does she think his return will do for her life? And does it?
- 7.** Why does Julia stay with Gabriel instead of going home to Steven? Was she fated to do it?
- 8.** Bill tells Carolina that ghosts are "a reminder, like a Post-It." What are Bill and Carolina's ghosts trying to remind them of? Why does Irma's ghost plague Carolina and not Simone? And what does Simone mean when she says at the end (p. 290) that Bill has seen "the face behind their faces"?
- 9.** Simone says that when Bill asks Steven to bet against the Oakland A's he was trying to "impart some sort of manly lesson." (p. 196) What lesson was Bill trying to teach? And what lesson does Steven learn?
- 10.** What kinds of things did the characters wish for? In the end, were people happier when they got what they wished for? What do you wish for? What do you think might happen if you were to get it?