***LETTERS FOR GRACE***

***READING GUIDE QUESTIONS***

Through her memoir, ***Letters for Grace***, author Jane Nicolet charts a ten-year journey of survival and growth following the unexpected death of her adult son and the ensuing loss of her marriage. Using personal poetry and letters to her son and metaphorical friend, Grace, Nicolet writes her way off grief’s roller coaster ride to finally land in a place of resurrected hope. The attached questions and discussion ideas are designed to accompany a conversation based on the memoir, ***Letters for Grace***.

1. Discuss the title of this book. What questions did you find yourself asking about the title? What were some of your earliest assumptions of the memoir based on its title? Did those assumptions turn out to be true?
2. Throughout the author uses personal poetry to delineate time and relationships. Which poem resonated most personally for you and why? Do you think the inclusion of her own poetry added to the power of the book’s message? Why or why not?
3. Address the issue of self-pity. Do you believe Nicolet indulges that impulse? If so, where do you find that happening? In what places or ways do you find her denying it?
4. Describe the tone used in ***Letters for Grace***. Do you find the author’s voice changing or constant throughout all four parts of the memoir? How does her writer’s voice affect your reading experience?
5. During a major part of her memoir the author repeats the idea that if one pretends long enough, eventually that pretense can become truth. Discuss that idea.
6. What does Fitzgerald’s statement about writing mean to you as a reader of others’ work: “You don’t write because you want to say something; you write because you’ve something to say.”
7. Who is Grace? Was the way Grace was portrayed in this text *intriguing, frustrating, confusing, interesting* or *revealing* for you? Talk about which of these descriptive words resonates most honestly for you, or offer another, and explain why that particular word is your choice.
8. Is there a turning point in this book? More than one? None? Talk about any turning points you may have connected with in the memoir.
9. Of the four major knots ( thought, abundance, detachment, forgiveness) the author works to untie in order to be free of grief’s roller coaster, which idea is most personally interesting to you and why?
10. The author writes, “. . . there is a rhythm and time to life’s happenings that can only be influenced when one gives up trying to control those very things.” (p. 137) What personal connections do this statement bring to mind?
11. During “Addendum for Grace,” pages163 – 166, Nicolet lists the top ten ideas that she eventually learns were *life-savers*. Do you believe anything on this list could be helpful as you interact with others who are grieving the loss of a loved one? Which of these ten most surprised you and why? If you could choose only one to remember, which would it by and why?
12. Does ***Letters for Grace*** leave you with any unanswered questions? What would you like to ask the author?