

Southfield Public Library

Annie's Ghosts by Steve Luxenberg

Discussion questions used at SPL April 2014

1. Who were the ghosts in the title?
2. The author states early on that he and his mother were close... after reading this book, would you agree with him?
3. Why do you think Beth never told her secret?
4. What's your opinion on whether her husband ever knew about Annie?
5. Why do you think the secret was able to be kept so well over all those years?
6. What else was this a story about? The city of Detroit? The Jewish community?
7. What do you think, from a 2014 point of view, of how disabled people were treated in the early part of the century? What do you think you would have done back then?
8. This was an interesting look at a family's story... what do you think Steve learned about his mom? About himself?
9. Was he able to keep his reporter's objectivity? Or was this more of a personal story?
10. Was he fair in his telling his mom's story?
11. Within Steve's family of siblings, were you surprised by the differences in opinion in whether or not Steve should pursue this search?
12. It was an interesting comparison between Beth hiding her family and Anna's grief at losing hers. Could you understand the argument between them over Beth's decision? Whose side would you come down on?
13. Anna had secrets of her own... what would have been your reaction if your mom had told you her secret about being married – and never divorced – to another man?
14. How would you compare Beth and Anna? Were they similar in any way? What were their differences?
15. Whose story is this?
16. Which parts of the book did you enjoy more?
17. Do you think it is important for privacy to be as well protected as it is now? Should medical records be kept forever?
18. Jack's story was interesting, too... what do you think happened to him in the service? Do you think if Beth hadn't had her sister, she would have been able to deal with his issues? What do you think gave her the strength to do so?
19. Did it make sense that there was such a gap between the time they first heard of the secret and Steve beginning his research? Why do you think they never asked Beth about it before she died?
20. Have there been secrets in your family that have been revealed? What did you think when they came out?
- 21.

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General discussion questions

- For the person who chose the book – What made you want to read it? What made you pick it for the book club? Did it live up to your expectations?
- How is the book structured? First person? Third person? Flashbacks? Narrative devices? Do you think the author did a good job with it?
- How would you describe the author’s writing style? Concise? Flowery? How is language used in this book? Read aloud a passage that really struck you. How does that passage relate to the book as a whole?
- How effective is the author’s use of plot twists? Were you able to predict certain things before they happened? Did the author keep you guessing until the end?
- Did the book hold your interest?
- How important is the setting to the story? Did you feel like you were somewhere else? Did the time setting make a difference in the story? Did the author provide enough background information for you to understand the setting and time placement?
- Which is stronger in the book – the characters or the plots?
- Would you recommend this book to someone else? Why? And to whom?

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Discussion questions taken from stevluxenberg.com

<http://stevluxenberg.com/content/clubs.asp>

Interview on NPR

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=103820359>

Friends of Eloise

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Friends-of-Eloise/263335123690527>