

Southfield Public Library

The Shack by William P. Young

Discussion questions used at SPL August -- 2009

1. Were you drawn into the story? How would you rate the author's writing skills? What did you like about the book?
 2. Before the loss of his daughter, what do you think his relationship with God was like? After her death?
 3. How does this book deal with religious stereotypes - "Papa" as a woman, Jesus as a middle-eastern man?
 4. What did you think of the personification of the Trinity?
 5. What did you think of his having killed his father? What was the correlation of that murder with the murder of his daughter?
 6. Did he need to have his own father's forgiveness before he could begin to forgive the man who murdered Missy?
 7. One of the many criticisms of this book is that Mack's God is "too nice." Do you agree?
 8. Why do you think Mack's meeting with God took place at the shack? What does the shack stand for, for you?
 9. Did this book help you understand better why bad things happen to good people?
 10. Does that suffering help people become closer to God or does it drive them away? Why do you think some people turn one way and not the other?
 11. What did you disagree with in this book?
 12. Do you see it as heresy? As an invitation to join a cult? As a way to create a new church altogether?
 13. Did you like the image of Mack's soul as a garden? How would you imagine your soul to look?
 14. How would you describe Mack's Great Sadness? Did it come to define him? Do you see this in yourself or other people you know?
 15. How did that Great Sadness affect his relationships with his family and friends? Is it possible to overcome that type of grief?
 16. While Mack forgave his father and the killer, do you think he forgave himself?
 17. Did Mack blame God for what happened to Missy? Did he come to forgive God, too?
 18. How would you answer Missy's question on p. 31?
 19. Why do you think Mack was more comfortable around Jesus than the others? Who would you have picked to be with the most?
 20. How did this challenge you? What has stayed with you the longest?
 21. What do you think the author was trying to say about organized religion? Do you agree?
 22. Do you think you could reach that level of relationship with God within a church?
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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 from About.com

http://bestsellers.about.com/od/bookclubquestions/a/shack_questions.htm

By [Erin Collazo Miller](#), About.com

1. Were you drawn in by the plot of *The Shack*?
2. Why do you think Mack's encounter with God took place at *the shack*? If God were to invite you somewhere, where would it be? (In other words, where is the center of your doubt and pain)?
3. Do you think suffering makes people closer to God or causes them to distance themselves from Him? What has been the pattern in your life?
4. Were you satisfied with God's answers to Mack about suffering? Do you struggle with believing God is good in light of all the tragedy in the world?
5. How is Young's description of God different from your concept of God? What parts of his description did you like and what parts didn't you like?
6. Did *The Shack* change any of your opinions about God or Christianity?
7. What were some of the things *The Shack* teaches about God, faith and life that you disagreed with?
8. Would you recommend *The Shack* to a friend?
9. Rate *The Shack* on a scale of 1 to 5.

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Discussion Questions for from LitLovers.com

<http://www.litlovers.com/reading-guides/13-fiction/925-shack-young>

1. How did reading this book affect your faith? Does it change, challenge, strengthen your image of God? Why is God portrayed as a woman, what reasons does God give Mack?
2. Does God answer convincingly the reason for the trinity?
3. Does the idea of God a character in the book, or God's first-person voice, bother you...or does it work within the context of *The Shack's* story?
4. Why did God let Missy die? Do you think *The Shack* answers convincingly the central question of theodicy, the existence of evil—or why, if there is a God, bad things happen to good people?
5. What does *The Shack* say about forgiveness—toward the self or toward those who have wronged you.
6. Young has been criticized for advocating lawlessness (p. 122) ...or universalism (p. 225)? Do you think that is a fair or unfair criticism?
7. Many readers find the first 4 chapters of *The Shack* almost too painful to read. Could they have been written in a way that would be less painful—without changing the book's message?
8. Does the book's ultimate message satisfy you? Is it possible to let go of control and certainty in life? Is it possible to live only in the present?

(Questions by LitLovers; please feel free to use them, online and off, with attribution. Thanks.)