

## LOOKING FOR PEYTON PLACE

### Reading Group Discussion Guide

1. Annie Barnes grew up feeling like an outcast. In what ways did this shape her adult life? Do you think it is possible to outgrow self-esteem issues? Discuss Kaitlin DuPuis in this light. Are the self-esteem issues faced by teenagers today the same as they were thirty years ago? How do they differ between boys and girls?
2. How would you describe the relationship between Annie Barnes and Grace Metalious? Do you ever have discussions with people who aren't there?
3. In the Prologue of *Looking For Peyton Place*, Annie points out that she is different from Grace. Discuss their differences. Are there other differences that you pick up as the story unfolds? How do these differences affect the choices Annie makes?
4. Would you call Annie Barnes's family dysfunctional? What about the DuPuis family? The Meade family?
5. A major theme in *Looking For Peyton Place* is the discrepancy between perception and reality. Specifically, Middle River offers many instances in which physical beauty is a foil for the ugliness that festers beneath. Can you give examples of this? Does this phenomenon apply to people as well? What other discrepancies between perception and reality did you find in this book?
6. Did James Meade have a moral obligation to come forward sooner with his knowledge of the mill's involvement with mercury poisoning? Was he justified in keeping the secret of the mill for as long as he did?
7. What is the first word that comes to mind when you think of the original *Peyton Place*? Have your thoughts about the place changed since reading *Looking For Peyton Place*?
8. When the original *Peyton Place* was written in the 1950's, the sources of scandal in small towns were murder, suicide, and illegitimate birth. What are the new "dirty little secrets" that Annie discovers in Middle River? What would the "dirty little secrets" be in your town?
9. Annie's personality takes several shifts in the course of *Looking For Peyton Place*. Describe these shifts. Can you explain them? Do you believe that people can be one way with friends and a completely different way with family?
10. Annie claims to love her life in Washington, D.C. What are its positives? Negatives? Compare and contrast the plusses of her Washington life and the plusses of her Middle River life.
11. *Looking For Peyton Place* was inspired by the original novel by Grace Metalious, and while it isn't necessary to have read that earlier book, familiarity with it offers another layer of discussion. How many *Peyton Place*-isms (e.g., Road's End Inn) can you find in *Looking For Peyton Place*?

12. Like the town of Peyton Place before it, Middle River is a character in and of itself. What are its traits?
13. The town of Peyton Place was created in 1954, the town of Middle River in 2004. Aside from issue of scandal, how are these towns the same? Different? Discuss the changes that have come to small towns in the last fifty years. Do you know of small towns that have not changed at all?
14. The theme of going home again after a long time away is one that many of us face in our own lives. Do you think there is an element of defeat when a person returns home? Or is it the reverse?
15. Does Dr. Tom Martin have a future in Middle River? What do you think his life will be like in ten years?