

The Light Through the Leaves
Readers' Guide and Book Club Questions
(Spoiler Alert: These questions contain plot reveals)

- 1) Every individual would respond differently to the trauma of their child's abduction. Do you think Ellis would have had addiction problems without the betrayal and abduction? Discuss how her childhood situation, including Zane's departure, influenced her perceptions about herself and influenced her reactions.
- 2) Zane's abrupt departure caused Ellis lifelong grief, yet she also left her children. In what ways did she rationalize this decision? Discuss why harmful actions sometimes repeat in families.
- 3) You don't know what Jonah has been going through until the end of the story. Did your feelings about his response to the family tragedy change at the end of the book?
- 4) Why didn't Ellis immediately tell Jonah she saw him with Irene the day of the abduction? What did that tell you about her character? Did you judge her more or less harshly for her silence?
- 5) Why did Jonah let his mother take over the household? Do you think he understood doing so was crushing Ellis yet more after the abduction?
- 6) Imagine how the family's post-abduction crisis might have been different if Ellis and Jonah had communicated better. Why couldn't they? Do you think the communication gap had more to do with Ellis, Jonah, or both?
- 7) Powerful grief can make a person want to run away. Discuss the ways in which Ellis attempts to 'erase' herself, including her encounters with men.
- 8) Why do you think Keith was different for Ellis? Do you believe in that kind of immediate connection?
- 9) At the end of Part 1, when Ellis says she feels she's moving in the right direction, is she? Would she have been happy wandering like Caleb if her life hadn't been changed by the assault?
- 10) What was your reaction toward Mama? Did your feelings about her change as the story continued?
- 11) Imagine Raven's life if she hadn't met the boys. Even if she eventually found her family, how would the absence of those relationships and her school experiences have affected her?
- 12) Why does Raven believe she's half Raven spirit? Why does her perception of her divided persona intensify as she has more experiences at school? If Mama hadn't forbidden seeing the boys beyond school, do you think Raven might have questioned her origins more?

- 13) Do you think Aunt Sonya did enough to ensure Raven's safety? Discuss the importance of the ways she influenced her sister's parenting.
- 14) Discuss the ways Ellis and her daughter were connected through their experiences though they were far apart.
- 15) Did Keith do the right thing when he drove Ellis to Florida?
- 16) Did you think Keith had good reason to leave Ellis when he discovered she had hidden her past from him?
- 17) Imagine River, Jasper, and Viola's lives if the baby hadn't been taken. Would the Bauhammer family have been happy? Do you think River would have the same problems?
- 18) Discuss how the childhood experiences of Jonah, Ellis, and Audrey changed many lives in this story.
- 19) Raven and Jackie had three months to consider their weighty decision at the end of the story. Why do you think they chose as they did?
- 20) How do you see the future of the united families?