

*New York Times* BESTSELLING AUTHOR

# BEVERLY LEWIS

## THE HEIRLOOM READING DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. The book's namesake is an heirloom wedding quilt that was given to Ella Mae's mother in 1911 (40). More than a sewing project, the quilt brings Clara and Ella Mae closer as they thoughtfully see to its restoration. What are some of your family heirlooms, and how have they helped you to connect to loved ones across generations? Do you think intangible items such as love, stories, faith, etc. could be considered heirlooms as well?
2. Throughout her summer with Ella Mae, Clara notices several differences between the Amish communities of Hickory Hollow, PA, and her hometown of First Light, IN. What differences surprised you? In which community would you feel the most at home and why?
3. Ella Mae is reluctant to move into the Dawdi Haus on her daughter and son-in-law's property. She describes the memories in her old farmhouse as "a shelter in [her] storm of sadness" (86). How has moving impacted your own life? Are there places in your life where memories made you want to stay put, or called you back to visit?
4. In chapter 17, Clara shares with Ella Mae: "Mamma used to say she felt like you saw her through the eyes of Jesus—the way you wrote to her in your letters all those years" (119). Who is someone in your life who sees you this way? How can we strive to view others "through the eyes of Jesus"?
5. How do the courtship traditions among die Youngie differ from your own experiences? Does courting seem more or less challenging than dating as we know it in the "fancy" world?
6. At first, Clara is taken off guard by Ella Mae's practice of praying aloud, having come from a community where silent prayer is the norm. In time, Clara comes to appreciate these spoken prayers and incorporates them into her own prayer life. What are some ways that you've grown in faith and your relationship with God that might seem unique or even odd to others?

7. Clara points out that most customers at Vera's quilt shop are tourists looking for "a souvenir of Amish country," going on to observe, "They must think of us as quite unusual" (126). Why do you think people are so fascinated by the Amish way of life? Have you ever toured Amish country?
8. In chapter 19, Ella Mae tells Clara: "When we stumble into a rough patch, God's Word is the truest guide. The best help" (131). What are some verses you turn to when you stumble into a rough patch?
9. After the buggy accident, the bishop introduces strict rules for die Youngie, including no boom boxes in courting carriages, additional supervision at youth gatherings, and no playing of instruments. What were your thoughts on these new rules? Did you agree with Ella Mae's feelings when she heard the news (142)?
10. Ella Mae is called the "Wise Woman" (96) by her neighbors and is known for providing tea and a listening ear to those seeking guidance and friendship. Yet despite always being available for others, Ella Mae comments that she needs to be more open about her own struggles. Later in the story, she finds great solace when she shares parts of her past with Clara. How can we be there to help "fill the cups" of the Ella Maes in our life—those who are always giving to others?
11. Throughout the book, both Tom Glick and Aaron Ebersol are interested in Clara, yet each pursues her in his own way. How did your feelings towards each young man change as the story progressed?
12. Clara faces a crossroads when she feels called to a future that Dat doesn't support. What can we learn from her experience? Have you ever found yourself in a place where your convictions contrasted with those of a loved one?
13. Clara's relationship with her stepmother feels strained in early chapters, but in the end, Eva ends up being a strong ally in Clara's decisions for her future. How did your perception of Eva change throughout the story?
14. At the start of the book, both Clara and Ella Mae are coping with loss. Their summer together helps each of them to heal from the pain and find new hope in the future. Clara says, "God has a way of puttin' people together, allowin' their paths to cross for His glory and honor" (311). Who are the people God put in your life when you needed them most?

15. The epigraph, "Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him," is echoed in one of the last lines of the book: "Ain't it somethin' how the Lord arranges our lives when we're willin' to let Him?" (311). How do Clara and Ella Mae's stories show the beauties of trusting in God?