

On the Same Page Book Club

Bon Air Baptist Church

Peace Like a River (Leif Enger) Discussion Questions

1. As the novel begins a miracle happens. Describe it. What do you think of this miracle? What about subsequent miracles in the book? What role do miracles play in the book?
2. Reuben Land often struggles to bring air into his lungs. Throughout the book, he is preoccupied with his own breathing. How does he deal with his ailment, and how is his character influenced by it? Does breathing take on special meaning in this novel?
3. Consider the details of the double homicide committed by Davy, Reuben's older brother. Does Reuben see Davy as a murderer or as one who acted in self-defense? Does he want Davy brought to justice? What about the other main characters, how do they feel? And what about you, the reader? What do you think about Davy?
4. Swede, Reuben's imaginative, prolific, and precocious younger sister, creates an epic poem about a cowboy named Sunny Sundown. Talk about Sunny's ongoing saga and what it meant to Swede.
5. In addition to the Sunny Sundown saga, several other outlaw tales and biblical stories are offered by Swede or Reuben. Explain how each enriches or influences the main narrative.
6. Discuss the character of Jeremiah Land and the center of his moral compass. What are his strengths, as a person and a parent? Does he have any weaknesses? Why did his wife leave him, all those years ago? Why does he "heal" the employer who fired him? How would you describe Jeremiah?
7. Reuben and his family travel west to find Davy, and they encounter Roxanna. Reuben observes, "Since arriving at [Roxanna's] house, we'd had no miracles whatever." Discuss the truth and falsehood of this remark. How might Roxanna herself be a miracle?
8. What does the character of Roxanna bring to the Land family? Over the course of the novel, how do Reuben's attitude towards Roxanna and his physical descriptions of her change? Do you think Roxanna's attitudes toward the Lands as a family and Jeremiah as a person undergo a similar metamorphosis?
9. Discuss Jake Waltzer and Sara. What parts do they play in the story? What does Reuben think about them? How does this play into the climax of the novel?
10. In "Be Jubilant, My Feet," the next-to-last chapter, Reuben and Jeremiah enter a world beyond this one. "Here in the orchard," Reuben recalls, "I had a glimmer of origin: Adam, I

thought.” Where exactly are Reuben and his father? What happens to them? Did Jeremiah surrender his life for Reuben? What did Reuben think? What do you think?

11. Explain how the themes of familial love, ardent faith, and prayer are seen in the lives of the characters of *Peace Like a River*.

12. Though not classified as Christian fiction, themes of religion, faith, and prayer play an integral part of the story. There are references to the miracles of Jesus Christ. Would you say that the book has a Christian message, or is it simply a good book?

13. Why was this book titled, *Peace Like a River*?