

## Discussion Guide

1. The book starts with the trip to Angola Prison. Does this lessen or increase the suspense of the story to know from the onset that Stephanie's mother's killer was apprehended and served time in the prison? What did you know about Angola before you read the book?
2. How do the individual childhood tragedies of Stephanie's parents affect them? Do they bond them together or separate them?
3. When the family finally moved back to the States, Stephanie's father took great pains to arrange for his prized stallion, "Alea Jacta Est," to follow them. What happened and what did this symbolize for her father?
4. Discuss the technique of interspersing Stephanie's story with insights into Nathan Wolfe's life in Angola prison. What effect does this technique have on you as the reader?
5. The death of a loved one brings out many emotions in individuals and affects their relationships. How did the main characters in the book react to Stephanie's mother's death, both immediately afterwards and then upon reflection?
6. Were you surprised to read that Stephanie connected again with her father after her mother's death? Stephanie wrote (p.144) that forgiving her father was "training ground" for forgiving Nathan Wolfe. Discuss what you think motivated her to forgive her father.
7. Discuss the ways Stephanie coped and adapted just after her mother's death and beyond, especially with her siblings and her children.
8. What event triggered Stephanie's curiosity about forgiving Nathan Wolfe? Discuss the element of timing - if this had occurred five or 10 years prior to this, would she have been receptive? In what ways did learning (or imagining) more about Nathan bring her closer to being able to consider forgiveness?
9. Stephanie's Aunt Joy lost her family home (for the second time) in Hurricane Katrina. How did helping her Aunt Joy help Stephanie on her own journey?
10. When Stephanie musters the courage to call the priest at Angola, he asks her if it makes a difference if Nathan Wolfe feels remorse over what he had done. How difficult might it be to forgive someone who does not feel or express remorse over a wrong that they have committed?
11. The story could have ended when Stephanie received Nathan's Notice of Release from Angola. What dimensions of forgiveness did the Epilogue add to the story?
12. After reading this story, do you think you could forgive someone who harmed you so deeply in your own life? If not, why? If so, why?