

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Of the two main characters, Gerrit and Rae, who did you relate the most to, and why?

Initially, it's hard to see how Gerrit, a retired farmer, and Rae, an overachieving teenager, have anything in common. What similarities did you notice between them as the story went on?

At the start of the story, did you think that Gerrit was going to be able to win Hannie's heart again? What about his blundering attempts do you think had an effect on her?

The animals in this book are almost secondary characters. Which of the pet-related antics was your favorite, and why?

What did you think of Gerrit's rivalry with his neighbor George? What do you think caused them to be so angry at each other?

When Rae thinks about her future and God, she wonders "What if He's just got regular, ordinary plans for me?" Have you ever wondered this? What might be a helpful answer to this question?

How do you think Gerrit was able to help Morgan? How was Morgan able to help Gerrit?

Do you feel that Evi's jealousy of Morgan and Rae was justified at all? How do you think she—and Gerrit—have handled that tension?

The author slowly reveals details about Luke and Jakob throughout the book. At what point did you realize that Gerrit felt responsible for Luke's death?

Gerrit says, "It's hard to be the oldest brother," then wonders if it's hard to be the youngest brother, too. What unique challenges have you faced related to your birth order?

Morgan says, "Sometimes it's easier to keep people at a distance." How do various characters in the story do that? What causes them to change?

Looking back on the title of the book after reading the story, what significance do you feel like it has for both Rae and Gerrit?