

Reading Guide

Hope's Embrace & Other Poems **2nd Edition**

Secondary

1 Which poem sticks with you? What part of it resonated or clashed with you personally? Was there an image that you could picture better than any other? Why might that be?

2 Poems are not like stories with a beginning, middle, and end. They often leap into an emotional touch point and explore in a non-linear manner. Does the poetical style free you or make you uncomfortable? Is that response reflected in your life habits? How does unstructured events or tasks make you feel? Why is that?

3 Does any poem feel familiar? What is the personal connection?

4 Did any of the poems help you see life from a new perspective? In what way?

5 Can a poem be written about anything? Could a short poem about a small, seemingly inconsequential object be as meaningful as a poem about grander, human passions?

Adult/Book Clubs

1 Which poem(s) did I react to emotionally? Why? What feelings did they stir up? What associations came to mind?

2 Poems don't have typical plot points with a beginning and ending, but they often take a reader someplace important, perhaps to remember something forgotten from childhood. Did you return to anywhere familiar while reading the poems?

3 Poems are much like dreams in their odd connectivity. Did any dreams come to mind as you read the poems?

4 We can be surprised by what annoys us. Was there anything in the poetry collection that irritated you? Does poetry itself make you feel uncomfortable? Why is that? Some people think poetry is a waste of time because it doesn't "achieve" any particular goal. But poetry peers into human emotional depths. Does self-reflection have value even when it is an ongoing exploration?

5 Were there any details that jumped out? Settings? Scents, tactile experiences, images, sounds? Do I naturally resonate with these things or are they missing pieces in my life that I long to fill, perhaps with the time and peace of mind to notice them in the real world?

Journal Reflections

- Why did I have to read particular sections over again?
- Are they poorly written? Beautifully written?

- Are they telling me something I need to hear?
- Or reminding me of something I've forgotten?
- Are they frightening me? Why?

- Consider strong emotional reactions to a particular poem.
- Am I reminded of a repressed grief?
- Do I need to work on processing something?
- How can I best work through these emotions when I put the book aside?

- Do I feel less lonely because certain poems felt familiar, as if I am not the only person in the world to think or feel a certain way?

- Who are the people in my life who show me real compassion?
- Do I ever feel empathy for others?

- Are there any qualities revealed that I wish I had?

- Do I find a certain poem dislikable or repugnant?
- What am I being reminded of in my life?
- Have these disagreeable feelings been repressed or managed well?
- Is a poem a safe place to face such feelings?

- How do I respond to the God references?
- Who is God to me?
- What do I really believe when no one is watching?
- Can I own my beliefs? Share them with someone?

- Like a dream, poems highlight our unconscious hidden selves and allow us to face our inner complexities.

- The most powerful part of reading a good book is not encountering something new but discovering our true selves.