

# GROUP READING GUIDE

## QUESTIONS *for* DISCUSSION

### Feeling for Bones

by Bethany Pierce

#### PHOTOGRAPHS/ PERCEPTION

1. Describe the photographs Olivia pastes on her bedroom wall. How are women depicted in fashion magazines? How do these magazines influence the way women see their bodies. Do you think they change the way women perceive their place in the world?

2. At one point, Olivia says, "I wanted to step into the magazine like Alice through the looking glass, like Mary Poppins into the magical world of a chalk drawing" (pg. 75). What does this collage symbolize for her?

3. Toward the conclusion of the novel, Olivia rips the magazine collage from her bedroom wall. On one hand, this is a practical effort to appease her mother who had demanded that the pictures be taken down. What more does tearing down these images represent? Why do you think she refers to the scrap as her little "paper kingdoms" (pg. 312)?

#### CHARACTER RELATIONSHIPS

4. How would you describe Olivia and Mollie's friendship? What effect does Mollie's confession of her past have on Olivia's attitude towards her own secret shame?

5. Why does Olivia resent the church? Do you think this is a common sentiment among high schoolers today?

6. When Margaret calls Beauregard their “own little Jesus” (pg. 37) what Scripture is she referring to? Do you think she serves as a model for all Christians?

7. Margaret’s unexpected death has a definitive effect on Olivia’s spiritual doubt. What is it about Margaret that inspires Olivia to reconsider Christianity?

#### THEMES

8. Dolls often appear in the story: there’s Mani the car lot mannequin and Callapher is frequently seen carrying Barbie dolls. What does this motif signify? Do you think these dolls are meant to be read ominously?

9. Discuss other instances in which the theme of fairytales surface. How do the stories from Olivia’s childhood relate to her present mindset?

10. At one point Lori gives Olivia a book entitled Design Language. From that moment on, several chapters begin with definitions from the little book. How do you think these definitions apply to their respective chapters? (For example: what are the two definitions for “Resolution” on page 347? Why does the second definition arguably apply to the epilogue of the story more than the first?)

11. Would you call Olivia’s revelation a vision? Do you think this “vision” has any practical bearing on Olivia’s eating disorder?

12. How does the idea of vision have multiple meanings in the novel? What do vision and perspective mean to a woman suffering anorexia? To an artist? To a Christian?

13. How would you describe the tone of the epilogue? What does the implied gap of time between Olivia’s revelation and the epilogue signify?