



An Open Book

The Stone Wall **Discussion Guide**

- 1 In the first line of the book, Anna tells us that Mammi Eliza often says "'Tis a waste of time to look back with regret." Looking back on the story, talk about how Eliza's time in Strasburg helped to form that view, and how her advice affected her granddaughter's life.
- 2 Anna's desire to start a new life chapter propels her away from her home in Mifflinburg to see what God might have for her elsewhere. Can you relate to that desire for a fresh start? In what ways is Anna's new life different? In what ways is it the same?
- 3 Even though seventy years separate Anna's and Eliza's experiences in Strasburg, *The Stone Wall* allows readers a window in to each of them. Did you enjoy getting a glimpse of Eliza as a young woman? In what ways is she like Anna? In what ways is she unlike?
- 4 In the course of her time as a tour guide, Anna visits a number of actual places in Lancaster County. What experiences would you be most interested to participate in if you were able to take one of her tours? Why do you think tourists are so interested in the Plain lifestyle?

- 5 Mammi Eliza and Sadie's older sister, Eva, struggle with forms of dementia, yet the two elderly women still reside with family. What are some challenges their caregivers face? Some joys? Have you experienced any similar experiences in caring for loved ones?

- 6 Anna is surprised that she found it so easy to adapt to life without electricity and other conveniences while staying with Sadie. What would be easiest for you to give up if you lived an Old Order Amish lifestyle for a summer? What would be hardest?

- 7 The idea for Peaceful Meadows came out of Gabe's daughter's need for therapy after the death of her mother. Why do you think loss and tragedy might inspire people to try new things? In what ways can loss sometimes lead to growth and wholeness?

- 8 Discuss Mart and Gabe and the similarities and differences between the two young men. Were you surprised by which one Anna ultimately chose?

- 9 Anna's family were concerned about her marrying an Old Order Amishman, primarily because of their different beliefs on God's grace. Do you think Anna handled their concerns in the right way? What do you think are some important areas for a couple to be in agreement on before marriage?

