

## Book Discussion Guide

For

*Jane in Bloom*

### A. Discussion Questions:

1. Jane's sister Lizzie is the most important person in the world to her. How does Lizzie make her feel? Do you have a sibling? What is your relationship like?
2. Jane's sister dies in "Jane in Bloom." Have you ever had to say goodbye to a person or a pet? How did that make you feel?
3. Colors are really important in the book. What are some colors you remember from the book and what did they describe? What do you think those colors meant? For instance, why do you think Ethel wears purple?
4. Jane finds her own special talent as a photographer. What is one of the things you do that makes you special and unique?
5. Jane shares her feelings with Ethel, and Ethel comforts her. She also shares her thoughts with Hunter. Do you have someone you can talk to when you are having a problem? Who is it?
6. How do you think the family would have been different if Lizzie had survived and recovered? How would Jane be different?
7. Floriography is the language of flowers. Let's make up a language for something else, like fruit. What would it mean if I gave you an orange? An apple? A watermelon?
8. Jane chooses to reach out to Kirsten Mueller, the girl who has been bullying her. Why does she do that? Why do you think Kirsten stops being mean to her after that? Is there someone you could reach out to? What do you think would happen if you did?
9. Jane's relationship with her mother and her father changes throughout the story. She realizes that both her parents love her very much, but they show it in different ways. Can you think of some ways your mom or dad shows you love? How do you love them back?

## **B. Recipe Suggestion**

Ethel makes her Famous Mac and Cheese to comfort Jane. And later, Jane makes Ethel's Famous Mac and Cheese for her dad. Here's the recipe they used:

### **Ethel's Famous Mac and Cheese**

Ingredients:

2 cups elbow macaroni  
1 cup grated Cheddar cheese  
1 cup grated Jack cheese  
¼ cup parmesan cheese  
½ cup breadcrumbs  
2 cups of milk  
3 tablespoons butter  
Salt  
Pepper  
Paprika  
1 tablespoon mustard  
½ cup breadcrumbs

Preparation:

1. Preheat oven to 350°.
2. Grease baking dish.
3. Boil 6 cups of water and a dash of salt.
4. Add two cups of macaroni.
5. When slightly tender, drain and set aside.
6. In pot, melt 2 tablespoons butter. Stir while gradually adding 2 tablespoons flour. Stir continually until smooth and light brown.
7. Add in 1 cup milk, 1 tablespoon mustard, and a pinch of paprika.
8. Simmer 10-15 minutes, then stir in 1 cup Jack and ½ cup Cheddar cheese.
9. Salt and Pepper to taste. Add remaining ½-1 cup of milk if necessary.
10. Stir in macaroni.
11. Pour mixture into baking dish. Cover with remaining Cheddar cheese.

12. In pan, melt 1 tablespoon butter. Add in ½ cup breadcrumbs and ¼ cup parmesan cheese.
13. Sprinkle mixture over top of macaroni.
14. Bake until breadcrumbs brown. (approx. 15-20 minutes)
15. Serve with a heaping spoonful of comfort.

### **C. Project Idea**

1. Memory Boxes – These do not have to be for someone who has passed away, they can be about a special person or special even in the child’s life or even about themselves.

Each person should bring one shoe box and then cut out photos from magazines, bring photos from home and draw pictures to decorate the box. They can add rhinestones, sequins, paints and feathers to decorate. Then they can take them home and fill them with mementos that represent the person or event they made the box for.

2. Photography Project – Everyone should take a photo or draw a photo of something that represents a color that makes them feel a certain way. It can be a pet, or a flower or a toy. Then they can share them with one another. If there is additional time, they could write a description of the photo or a poem to go with it.
3. Color Project – Everyone should choose a color of crayon and then write a description of what the color reminds them of and how that color makes them feel. They can share the feelings with the class. They could also draw something using that color and then write a story about it.

### **D. Weblinks or Related Reads**

*Bull Rider* by Suzanne Morgan Williams (which is about a boy trying to cope with his older brother’s life changing injuries in Iraq).

*Models Don’t Eat Chocolate Cookies* by Erin Dionne (about teen self image and dieting).

*Skin* by Adrienne Maria Vrettos (about a teen’s eating disorders told from a brother’s perspective).

*Perfect* by Natasha Friend (about a teen with eating disorders and her recovery).

## **E. Music and Other Inspiration**

I listened to Michelle Branch, *The Spirit Room*, the entire time I was writing this book. Michelle's vocals seemed to be coming from Jane herself and inspired my work.

I also used Pablo Picasso's *Girl Before a Mirror* (1932) as a visual tool. For me, this vivid painting tells Jane's story without words.

What songs inspire you? What art inspires you?