

Discussion Questions

1. Conflict and reconciliation are central themes in *The Search*. Discuss the ways in which the characters come to peace with their past.
2. What kind of a woman was Bertha Riehl? As you were reading, what was your reaction to her? Did your opinion change over time?
3. As Jonah puts Bess on the bus to go to Stoney Ridge, he tells her, “Be careful because—”

Bess teased him that each time he said goodbye to her, even as she hopped on the school bus, he would add the caution, “Be careful, because . . .” *Because . . . I won’t be there to protect you. Because . . . accidents happen.*

What is Jonah really afraid of? How does he finally come to terms with that fear?

4. In one scene with her two visiting friends, Lainey defends

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her decision not to go to culinary school, as she had planned. “I’ve learned more about cooking in the last few months here than I ever could in a formal school. Here, food means more than nourishing a body. Sharing a meal nourishes a community.” What did she mean by that? In what ways is the Amish relationship to food and meals different from mainstream society’s?

5. Simon spent a lifetime trying to be “significant.” What finally spoke to his heart? Do you think his change was permanent?
6. What kind of future do you see for Bess and Billy? Do you think they will end up together? Or do you think Bess has outgrown Billy?
7. Do you think Bess will ever tell Simon that he is her biological father? Do you want her to tell him? Why or why not?
8. What did you learn about Amish life in reading this novel?