



DISCUSSION GUIDE

The Maggie Barnes Trilogy: Broken Glass by Mary VanderGoot

1. The title of the book and a detail in Chapter One involve broken glass. What is the significance of Maggie's fear that her little children will cut their feet on broken glass?
2. What is the significance of Tee's asking Maggie if she was surprised when she opened the door and they first met? What is the significance of Maggie asking Tee that same question? Even though the words are the same, is it really the same question in both instances?
3. Explain how you see Maggie's relationship with her five children. Does she love equally but differently, or does she seem to love them differently and unequally?
4. When Maggie reflects on her children's ways of caring for her and her own desire for independence, she reveals some tension between being cared about and being taken care of. What is the difference?
5. Rowland and Willard are twins. What do you think is the significance of the firstborn's role being taken over by the twin who is born second? Can you think of other examples of this in literature?
6. There is tension between Maggie and her daughter-in-law Andrea. Compare this to stereotypes of mother-in-laws. Who is responsible for this tension?
7. Because this is a family saga that covers fifty years, there is time for each child to go through a transformation. In each case there is also a parallel transformation in Maggie. What are the parallels?
8. The relationship Maggie has with Tee is not the relationship of a mother to a child, despite their age difference. What is their relationship? Can you give it a name?
9. There are some ways in which Maggie is not able to understand Tee. Why? How does that challenge Maggie's growth?
10. The author seldom describes what the characters in the novel look like, but she does give details about their names. What significance do you see in the way the author names the characters?