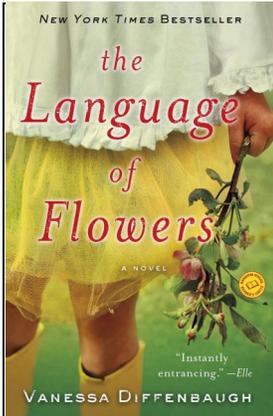




Discussion Guide



About the Book

Book Title: *The Language of Flowers*

Author: Victoria Diffenbaugh

Published by: New York: Random House, 2012

Book Website: http://www.randomhouse.com/rhpg/features/vanessa_diffenbaugh/author/

Author Website: <http://www.vanessadiffenbaugh.com/>

Questions for Discussion

1. What were your general impressions of this book?
2. What sort of relationship to flowers do you have and what has shaped your relationship with flowers?
3. Have you ever used flowers to express sentiment? In what ways?
4. What were the themes of this book?
5. What did you see as the strengths of this book? Were there also things about the story that bothered you? Explain.
6. How did flowers contribute to the storyline? To the character's personalities?
7. What do you think caused Victoria's healing over time? Is this realistic in a situation such as hers?
8. What experiences (if any) have you had with foster children? Would you recommend this for foster children and families with foster children? Why or why not?
9. Read over the MAMs comments on the book. Which of them do you most agree with and why?
10. In what ways, if any, will this book change your life or perspective?

Other Links...

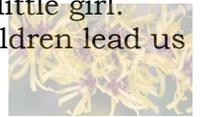
The Language of Flowers—Meeting Vanessa Diffenbaugh https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sRa_4abqccM

Club Favorites: Vanessa Diffenbaugh <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kiT9fVnzikM>

NANCY: Yarrow = cure for a broken heart. I chose this book because nature has become more and more important to me as I hear a call to speak for the earth and to let the earth speak through me. (Check out my Letters from the Earth blog at www.spiritualseedlings.com!) For this reason, I found the “language of flowers” such an intriguing title and concept. I’m still wondering who assigned the meanings to the various flowers and how they determined that, but nevertheless I really enjoyed this novel. As these characters connected to the earth through flowers, flower arrangements and messages sent through bouquets and single flowers, I felt myself drawn in to a very artfully written novel of pain, healing and redemption. The brokenness in our communities, in families and in the foster care system often leads to people damaged to the core. I celebrate that there are people who seek to love and reach out to others. And I celebrate the way that the earth can help healing take place. I encourage you to read this novel and to get deeply in touch with the flowers in your life!



SALLIE: Hazel = reconciliation. I’m totally in love with Hazel! What a marvelous little girl. Named with a hope that she might bring reconciliation and she did! Let the children lead us into hope!



ABIGAIL: Purple hyacinth = please forgive me. What a first novel by Vanessa Diffenbaugh! She so artfully wove this story from start to finish between past and future, with many surprises along the way. Especially the artist trying to paint the perfect purple hyacinth. I won’t say more in case you haven’t read it, but to me that was the crowning glory of this story. I loved it!



MOLLY: Carolina Jasmine = separation, Indian Jasmine = attachment. Vanessa Diffenbaugh had me from hello! In the opening paragraph she references the difference between waking and sleeping, between separation and attachment, between these two types of Jasmine and plops us down into a story of a little girl struggling through foster homes to find love and hope. I liked this book because it was very real. It describes so well the alienation children feel when they are tossed aside by their parents and mistreated by adults. That it had a happy ending, helped, too. The romantic in me wants to believe that there is redemption and that love can prevail after great suffering.



PRISCILLA: Tiger Lilly = Royalty, the Queen. Do you remember the first flower Grant gave to Victoria? Victoria through it away and said she wasn’t a queen. But Grant knew. Jesus did, too. We are all the royal priesthood now. That’s what flowers can do for a girl. Way to go Grant!



KATHARINE: Acacia = secret love. I did a little research on the language of flowers and found that this was so popular during Victorian England because people were so proper, they couldn’t just come right out and express their feelings, but they could give flowers with particular meanings to express secret messages. It’s also true back in Biblical times that certain plants and herbs were given special meanings; frankincense and myrrh – gifts for a King! I agree with the other MAMs that Diffenbaugh did a great job in writing this novel, integrating the Victorian meanings for flowers. And in modern society the broken people often need something else than words to express themselves; the flowers seemed to help save the day!



JANE: Lily of the Valley = a return of happiness. Well, I was impressed with Victoria’s business sense. She’s my woman. Did you notice how she intuitively knew what flowers the people needed? Remember the grandfather, buying for his unhappy granddaughter’s 16th birthday? Victoria made Lilies of the Valley for a return to happiness. And it wasn’t just about giving the right flowers, but letting the customers know what the flowers would do. The power of suggestion, and positive thought go a long way. No wonder this young woman had more customers than she could handle! She did us proud!

