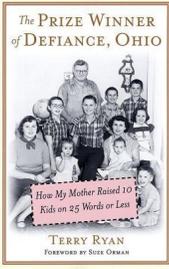




Discussion Guide

About the Book



Book Title: *The Prize Winner of Defiance, Ohio: How My Mother Raised 10 Kids on 25 Words or Less*

Author: Pat Ryan

Published by: New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001

Publisher Website: <http://authors.simonandschuster.com/Terry-Ryan/1920300>

Questions for Discussion

1. **What were your general impressions of this book?**
2. **Does this story remind you of your childhood and your own mother in any way? Explain?**
3. **What did you sense was the author's take on her family experience? Her mother? Her father?**
4. **If you wrote a biography of your own family's life how would it be similar to this and how it would it be different?**
5. **How was alcoholism treated by the people in the Ryan's community? How do you think this story would be the same or different today related to the father's drinking?**
6. **If you saw the movie based on this book, how did you think it compared to the book? Which did you enjoy more and why?**
7. **How did Ryan use humor in conveying her family's story?**
8. **Read over the MAMs comments on the book. Which of them do you most agree with and why?**
9. **In what ways, if any, will this book change your life or perspective?**

Other Links...

See the real Ryan kids "all grown up" in this clip from the end of the "Prize Winner of Defiance, Ohio"—the movie on YouTube at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FVJX6ODlwFY>

The Prize Winner of Defiance, Ohio came out as a movie in 2005.



NANCY: What a story of resiliency! Evelyn Ryan used her gifts to raise a brood of wonderful children in spite of her alcoholic husband and poverty. In this book, Evelyn's daughter, author Terry Ryan, finds a way to overcome her anger about her father and celebrate her mother combining their prose in this fitting tribute, transcending generations, calling us to use the cards we've been dealt to make the most of our lives. Like Evelyn and Terry Ryan, I find the writing process grounds me, propels me forward and rewards me with a full life.



SALLIE: Aren't kids great? What I find so good about this book is the resiliency of children. The Ryan kids had a very difficult father, but their mother showed them the way. Kids can triumph over great adversity when they have strong role models. For the most part the Ryan kids turned out okay! And Terry Ryan had great success with this book. So sad she didn't live very long to enjoy the fruits of her labor.



ABIGAIL: What intrigued me about the book was how the family worked around the pathetic father figure. He lost his singing voice and never recovered, turning to alcohol and though there were moments of love, he basically created hell for himself and often his family. Today we have AA, divorce, a more sympathetic church and legal system which would probably remove him from the home if he refused to stop drinking. Which is better?



MOLLY: Well, I thought this was a well-written book. It had drama, humor, poetry and a story of triumph. I loved it. So many Black families have similar stories of dogged determination, strong female figures, kids overcoming obstacles. But sometimes kids fall flat in these situations, too, especially when they face road blocks in society.



PRISCILLA: Oh my! The innovative ladies of yesteryear... weren't they grand? I loved the contest club she joined and how they encouraged each other. These stay-at-home Moms are my heroes. Isn't this the way life should still be? Moses doesn't want me to work a day again in my life. If only all the women could stay home again. Wouldn't everything be better again?



KATHARINE: This is such a wonderful recreation of the 1950s and the advent of advertising. It was a different world back that we all remember so well. The jingles being created in the households, selling the society on becoming consumers. Contests were a creative way to engage the customers back then. From the farm to the city, from producers to consumers. This book not only tells one family's story, it's a period piece that reflects the changes in this historical period as well.



JANE: No wonder "Tuff" Terry Ryan chose a woman over a man for her life partner after growing up in this family! She was the one that couldn't celebrate when her Mom saved them from foreclosure because she really couldn't forgive her dad. I got it. It was a sad story. You can cheer on Evelyn Ryan and celebrate her amazing ability to write her way through hard times, but it's hard to overlook the pain inflicted by Kelly Ryan. Why is life like this? Kelly told Evelyn, her problem was that she was too damn happy. They all laughed at that one. And later she told Kelly he was too damn unhappy. And they laughed at that, too. The extremes of living. A good book. It made me think about those who choose alcohol over the possibilities of life. I've known a few in my day. No fun.