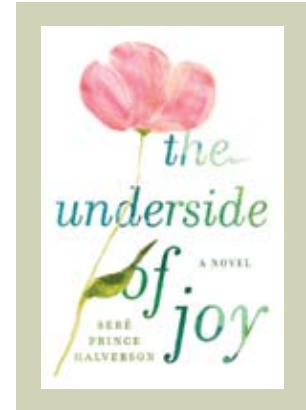


The Underside of Joy by Seré Prince Halverson



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the theme of avoidance in this book. Why does Ella eventually resolve to break away from that tradition?
2. What were your first impressions of Paige? How did they change as the story progressed?
3. Would you be able to forgive a significant other for keeping secrets from you, as Joe did from Ella?
4. What would you do if you were put into a situation where everyone was encouraging you to hide the truth? Would you react as Ella did? Do you feel she made the right choice?
5. “Internment comes from fear” (p. 273). How are the characters in this book imprisoned by fear?
6. Were you aware that the U.S. imprisoned Italians and Germans in addition to the Japanese during World War II? How did this book shed light on this little known part of history?
7. How did this event affect Joe. Sr. and Marcella’s attitudes and behaviors toward Paige? Toward Ella?
8. The author speaks about terroir, or how the history of a place permeates grapes in wine and, as Ella points out, people. Which people in the book have a specific terroir? What is the terroir of the people in your life?

continued

9. Describe how the author uses both visual and sensory descriptions in her book. Did they help you see why Ella loved Elbow and Sonoma County?
10. How did the people in Ella's life see her through her grief over Joe's death and the custody battle over her children?
11. Were you inspired by Ella's journey in this book? Why or why not?
12. How is "drowning" used as a significant theme in the novel, both literally and figuratively?
13. In what ways are Ella and Paige different? In what ways are they the same? If you were Annie or Zach, who would you want to live with?
14. Why do you think Joe kept Paige's paisley robe?
15. For a custody case such as this, do you think the law is fair? If you were the judge, what would you have done?
16. Were you satisfied with the end of the book? Why or why not?