

Discussion Questions for *Mare's Nest*

1. Have you been in a situation similar to the one Annie was in? Having to choose between a rock and a hard place in order to do right by your child? How did you resolve it?
2. At one point in the story, Annie wonders if you can love your child too much. What do you think?
3. Do you think that we as mothers are compelled to take into consideration the way our mothers raised us? Did you decide your parenting approach based on the way your mother parented you? What changes did you make in the way you raised your kids versus the way you were raised?
4. One in three people are involved with horses, be it owning their own, knowing somebody who does, or betting at the track, etc. Do you know or have you heard of anyone having similar experiences to the ones Annie went through?
5. Do you feel that helping Teddy to pursue her love of riding and showing despite the pitfalls was a smart choice on Annie's part? What would you have done had you been in her shoes?
6. Annie's past plays a crucial part in her present. How much of your past dictates your present?
7. There are some pretty tough topics brought up throughout the story. Drugs, abuse of animals, swindling, and more. Should Annie have pulled Teddy out of the sport once she'd made these horrific discoveries? If so, how should she have done that?
8. Annie made a lot of mistakes while raising her kids. Do you regret any of the decisions you made when raising your children? What would you do differently if you were a new mother?
9. When Annie experiences panic attacks and depressions, she attempts to keep them hidden from her kids and others because she's ashamed. Do you feel there is still a stigma attached to mental illness?

10. Who was your favorite character in the book? Were there any that you could especially relate to? Any that you especially didn't?

11. Pete is a feel good dad. Do you see his lack of serious involvement in raising the children as typical? Or with more women in the workforce, is that changing now?

12. How do you think Annie's mother died?

13. How do you envision life continuing in the Bellamy family after the conclusion of the story? What do you think happened to Pete and Annie? Did they stay together or, like Annie's own parents, did their marriage ultimately fall apart due to the strains? What about Teddy and Louie? What do you see in the kids' futures?

14. Were there any special moments in the book that you particularly enjoyed?

15. Loss, and the fear of loss, is a theme of the book. Have you ever lost someone dear to you? How did you cope? Does time really heal all wounds?