

Never

Poems by Jorie Graham

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A Reading and Discussion Guide

Prepared by Mary Ann Tourjee
Central Massachusetts Regional Library System

Massachusetts
Award Winner
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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What does the word "never" mean to you? Ask the group to see how many different ways the word might be used.
2. Complete the listening exercises below. As you finish the exercises, reflect on the following: What is the overall composition of *Never*? Is there a beginning, a middle, and an end - or is it a random collection of poems? Does the order of the poems make a difference?
3. To close, each member of the discussion group may share a selection from one of the poems and tell why that selection was chosen. Allow some time for final reflections.

ACTIVITIES:

Listening Exercises:

1. Prayer (page 3)

Instruct the group to listen to a reading of the poem. As the poem is read, ask them to write down what they *see, hear, feel, and taste*. Ask the group to share their observations. Reflect on the meaning of "never" in this poem.

2. Prayer ("From Behind Trees") (page 51)

Instruct the group to listen to a reading of the poem. As the poem is read, ask them to write down what they *see, hear, feel, and taste*. Ask the group to share their observations. Graham describes this poem as an enactment of metamorphoses. Discuss the ways this is demonstrated in the poem. Reflect on the meaning of "never" in this poem.

3. Dusk Shore Prayer (page 31)

As the leader reads this poem aloud, ask the group to close their eyes and listen to the rhythm. What does it convey? In a sentence, what is this poem about?

4. Relay Station (page 106)

Throughout the book there are many images of the sea. Discuss the imagery of the sea and the role the sea plays in this poem.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

About the Author:

Simmons, Lee. "[Jorie Graham, Ambassador for Poetry.](#)" Harvard University Gazette, October 7, 1999.

Casper, Robert N. "[About Jorie Graham: A Profile.](#)" Ploughshares: The Literary Journal at Emerson College, 2004.

"[Jorie Graham.](#)" The Academy of American Poets, November 4, 2003.

About the Book:

Byrne, Edward. "[Jorie Graham: Never; Review of Jorie Graham's Ninth Book of Poetry.](#)" Valparaiso Poetry Review: Contemporary Poetry and Poetics.

HELPFUL LINKS:

Academy of American Poets: <http://www.poets.org/>

Poetry Kit (list of online poetry discussion groups): <http://www.poetrykit.org/wkshops2.htm>



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