

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

## *Do You Know the Monkey Man?*

by **Dori Hillestad Butler**

For thirteen-year-old Samantha, life consists of too many unanswered questions about her past. Why has her father not tried to contact her all these years? How could he have allowed her twin sister to drown in Clearwater Quarry when they were only toddlers? And how can Samantha's mother expect her to accept some man she hardly knows as her new father?

Samantha already has a father out there. Somewhere. As she sets out to find her father and discover what really happened the day her sister was presumed drowned, she uncovers painful secrets that threaten to destroy her family all over again.

1. Sam uses different methods to gain information about what happened to her sister. Which source of information do you think Sam finds more helpful: the spiritual or the factual? How are they similar and different?
2. How do Sam and Angel define the roles of father differently? How do their definitions change over time?
3. What conclusions does this book make about what a father figure is or should be? What does a "real" father figure mean to you?
4. What events in Sam's life might have persuaded her to solve the mystery of what happened to her dad and sister?
5. Angela calls Sam both an optimist and obsessed. What kind of line does Sam draw between obsession with the mystery and her optimism in finding her family? Where would you draw the line between "optimistic" and "obsessed"?
6. This novel blurs the line between strangers and family. How can strangers be family, and vice versa?
7. How are descriptions of mothers in this book similar and different to those of fathers?
8. Do you think what Joe did was right? Why or why not? Should he have tried to contact Suzanne and Sam to explain?
9. Do you think it is better that Sam now knows the truth about her sister and father? Why or why not?
10. What are situations in your family when it was better to tell or know the truth?
11. What do you make of the book's title? How does it relate to the mystery of the book? How does it relate to the themes of fatherhood in the book?
12. After reading this book, how have your ideas about families changed? How have your ideas about fatherhood changed?



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