

## ***The Englisher Discussion Questions***

1. Talk about how the book's opening quotation relates to the life of Annie Zook: "I grew up fostered alike by beauty and by fear."
2. Louisa tells Sam Glick, "Sometimes it's best if relationships fail." Have you ever felt this way about a former romantic relationship of yours or someone else's?
3. Compare Louisa to her friend Courtney. If you were to travel to Amish country, would you favor Louisa's or Courtney's way of seeing it? Why?
4. Do you think Irvin Ranck is justified in keeping Zeke from seeing his wife and family?
5. What do you think of Louisa's attraction to Sam? If you were in her shoes, would you pursue the relationship?
6. One of the many things that appeals to Louisa about Sam is his focus on family--past, present, and future. Does your family place much emphasis on your ancestry? In what ways? Have you found this to be valuable?
7. Annie ponders the roles of men and women in Plain and modern society--the "empowered female" Lou describes versus the submissive Amishwoman of Annie's experience and their corresponding male counterparts--particularly within the context of marriage. What do you think are some of the strengths or shortcomings of each culture's general approach?
8. Both Louisa and Ben have come to Amish country in search of peace and a better sense of who they are in life. How has each been affected by the sojourn in Amish country? Do their paths seem at all similar?
9. Do you agree with Annie that her father operates with a double standard when it comes to disciplining her and Yonie? Have you ever known a parent or grandparent to exercise some sort of double standard? What kind of effect does this have on the child's/children's relationship with this person? On sibling relationships?
10. Do you think it is possible for Louisa and Sam to "just enjoy the friendship," as Louisa once implied? What about Annie and Ben? Do you think men and women can form purely platonic close friendships? Why or why not?
11. Esther questions whether it is "the Lord's will" for her to return home to Zeke.

What do you think? Are there times when following God's will might put us in a precarious situation? Should any special considerations be made when children are involved?

12. "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are over their prayers," Julia says, quoting 1 Peter 3:12 to Esther. Do you see this verse playing out in Esther's circumstances?

13. When Esther learns she will be permanently shunned, Esther prays for strength to face "the years of social avoidance awaiting her." Can you imagine daily life while under similar constraints? Given a choice, would you stay among your loved ones and endure humiliation or depart the community?

14. Julia assures Esther that "Who a person is--how they conduct their lives--will influence a child for righteousness." Did you know any people of exceptional faith as a child? In what ways did they influence you?

15. When Louisa bemoans her attraction to Sam, Annie says, "People do crazy things for love... Things even harder than changing a lifestyle." If you were in Louisa's place, would you be willing to give up your lifestyle for love? Why or why not?

16. Louisa leaves Amish country almost as suddenly as she arrived. Do you think she is cowardly for leaving in this way? Do her reasons for going seem legitimate?

17. Contrast Annie's reaction to being forbidden to see Ben to the one she experienced when her father demanded she give up her art. Which do you think is stronger? Why do you think this is?

18. After her breakup with Ben, Annie asks herself, Is this love, when you long to be with someone beyond any good sense? How do you define romantic love?

19. Ben returns home to give Annie time--and some space--to figure out what she wants. In what ways is his departure reminiscent of Louisa's? How is it different?

20. Did Annie's decision to leave her parents' home surprise you? Why do you think she views her actions this time as worse than her inability to resist art when the Ordnung forbids both English dress and creating fine art?

21. I have no idea how almighty God calls someone, though it seems to me I was born with this inexpressible passion for art, Annie muses. What do you think constitutes a calling? Do you have any talents or gifts you could view in this way?