

Thread for Pearls: A story of resilient hope

Book Premise: A near-death experience in a car with her Mother, running from tear gas at a Vietnam War rally with her father, a year in India among the country's 'untouchables,' the dynamics of living on a rural Pennsylvania commune. . .all before Fiona's 13th birthday. The challenges of her life journey grew with her.

Set during one of the more politically divisive eras in American history, Thread for Pearls is a coming-of-age tale that takes us on a young heroine's journey to faith and freedom amid a turbulent family dynamic. It's a story of resilient hope that questions whether it's the events (pearls) of our lives that define us, or the lifeline (thread) on which we choose to string them that creates continuity and gives us something to hold onto as we navigate our path.

Journal Project: Each week, as scheduled below, you will read a segment from the book and submit a response to the accompanying prompts, below. Your response will cover 1-2 8½ x 11” pages, single spaced—with paragraphs. My purpose is neither to get you to believe nor disbelieve, adopt nor reject, practice nor ignore the lessons you discover in this story, but to investigate them, ponder their origins and applications, and interpret their relevance to your own life experiences and interactions with others.

Due Date	Chapter	Pages	Questions
Sept 9	1	1-65	Characterize or describe the character of Peggy and of Wolf. Do you judge or feel empathy for either in their circumstances or behavior? Characterize Fiona as a little girl. What influences and defines her?
Sept 16	2	66-100	Explain your interpretation of India before and after reading this passage. Evaluate the family's experiences in terms of pros and cons, and decide whether you think they should have gone to India. How does this episode in Fiona's life affect her?
Sept 23	3	101-152	What were Fiona's parents seeking at Mystic Meadow? Can you justify their decisions and lifestyle? How did this experience influence Fiona's life perspective and sense of self?
Sept 30	4	153-202	Characterize Fiona's grandmother. What is her effect on Fiona? Compare and contrast her homelife with Gram and her homelife with her father? Which is the better scenario for Fiona?

Oct 7	5	203-247	How does Fiona characterize California? Is she more interested in the state or her mother? How does she feel about her mother? How was she influenced by different adults she encountered? Why did the author include the Vietnam story?
Oct 14	6	248-288	What are the different decisions, interests and events Fiona experiences? How do these-coming-of-age experiences influence Fiona's sense of self?
Oct 21	7	289-326	How do you interpret this coming-of-age story among a diversity of friends? Why did Fiona go along with the experimentation? What more does it tell you about her character and mindset at this point? What is your perspective on the way her mother handled the situation?
Oct 28	8	327-350	What is your reaction to this difficult chapter? Write a letter to Fiona, as if you are her friend, talking about how you feel and what you would like to convey to her.
Nov 4	9	351-392	How do you interpret Peggy's unlikely tenderness to Fiona? What do you make of Fiona's exploration of religious faith? What do you think of Fiona's decision to graduate early from high school and head to college? Why does she do this?
Nov 11	10	393-446	What parts of Fiona's college experience can you relate to? How does her experience parallel or differ from yours? Consider the ending of the story – or the beginning of adulthood for Fiona. Where would you have ended the book, and why?
Nov 16		Final Analysis Essay	

You will be responsible for having read the chapter and thoughtfully responded to the prompts listed above by the corresponding class date. **Please submit your typed work via email or Canvas.**

This semester-long reading assignment addresses Outcome 1: Comprehension/Interpretation; Outcome 2: Analysis/Interpretation; and Outcome 3: Presentation.

Value: To the student, inestimable. To your grade, 50 points