

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS for *Happy Valley*

1. Walker Logan has been on the road—and on the run—for two years. What reasons does he give his sister, Victoria, for suddenly deciding to look at a house and property? Where is this property and what drew Walker to it? What does Victoria think about the idea, and where does she suggest Walker might settle down instead? Resigned to Walker's choice, what does Victoria offer to do to help with the house? Have you ever been to Happy Valley—a small rural community between Maryville and Townsend—or to Abrams Creek Campground nearby, where Walker is staying?
2. Area realtor Cameron Johnson, with his younger brother, Quillen, comes to show Walker the home and property. What does Cameron think about the real estate Walker is considering? What is the house like, and what is its history? Although the property is very run down, Walker sees past its current condition. What does he envision building on the property along the main road? How do Cameron and Quillen react to the idea of a store in Happy Valley? Have past stores in the valley been successful? When Quillen gets excited about Walker's idea and asks if he can work for him, how does this request begin a friendship for Walker with the Johnson family?
3. Walker encounters a young woman while walking around the mountain property after Cameron and Quillen leave. How do the two meet? What is Juliette doing on the Old Stone House property? Although Juliette never gives her name to Walker at this meeting, what does she tell him about herself and where she is staying? What does Walker think of Juliette? What small event sweetens their meeting in Happy Valley, leaving both with a memory that lingers?
4. After Walker and Juliette's meeting, the story picks up a year later when Juliette comes back to the family farm in Happy Valley again. Why did she come back? What has happened to her grandfather? What do you learn about Juliette's background and early life as the story moves forward? Where does she live and work when not visiting with her grandparents? What does her brother, George, tell her about Old Stone House and the property across the main road from their farm that surprises her? What do most people think about Walker Logan building a general store in Happy Valley?
5. Dade Claiborne stops by to visit at the Hollander farm the morning after Juliette returns. Who is Dade, and what kind of relationship does Juliette have with him? What does Dade do for a living, and where does he live? What do you learn about Dade's family and his character at this meeting? As you later meet Dade's mother, Onalee, and his brother, Ronnie, how do you see that they are different from Dade? Why does Juliette agree to go out with Dade when she doesn't like him much? What problems does Dade cause for Juliette and for Walker as the story progresses?
6. Juliette's grandmother encourages Juliette to walk over to the Old Stone House property to see if she can pick some apples for her again. Curious to see the new store, Juliette agrees. Who does Juliette unexpectedly meet there? What is the store like? Have you seen

rural general stores like the one Walker created? What persuasive reasons does Juliette give Walker when she asks him to hire her to work at the Happy Valley Store? Who else has Walker hired to work at the store? What duties does Walker want Juliette to handle, and why does he worry about hiring her? After their meeting at the store, when Juliette goes to get apples for her grandmother, how does Walker's dog, Marsh, instigate a scene much like the one when Juliette and Walker first met?

7. Juliette is a quilter and specializes in a type of quilt called a "crazy quilt." What is a crazy quilt? Have you ever seen a crazy quilt? As the book progresses, what types of items besides quilts do you learn that Juliette makes? How did Juliette's mother and her grandmother influence her skill in quilting? Juliette sells her quilts and art at The Full Moon in Murphy, where she lives, and at a shop at the John C. Campbell Folk School nearby, where she teaches quilting. Have you ever visited Murphy or the folk school in Brasstown? Why has Juliette struggled so much with her identity as a quilter, and why has she often felt somewhat like a "black sheep" in her own family? How is the rest of her family in Happy Valley different from her—her grandparents; brother, George; his wife, Laura; and their children, Robert and Kirsten?

8. Moves and changes can often be difficult. Does Juliette tell Walker it's easy or hard to be a newcomer in a small tightly knit community like Happy Valley? What problems does she tell him she's experienced since coming to the valley when her mother died in Italy? Juliette and George have different mothers, who both died young. George's mother was Patsy Rhea Hollander, a valley girl. Why does Patsy's mother, Hettie Rhea, hold bitterness toward Juliette and her father even after all these years? How has this made life hard for Juliette? As you met Hettie in scenes in the book, what did you think about her? How did Walker, later in the story, help to bring about a partial truce to Juliette's problems with Hettie?

8. Happy Valley is full of rich and interesting people but none quite as unusual as Vernon and Harley Ledford. How does Walker first meet the Ledford brothers? What is different about them, and what did you think about the brothers? Have you ever known any survivalists like the Ledfords? How does Walker relate to and form an unexpected friendship with Vernon and Harley? How does that friendship grow through the book, and how do the Ledfords help Walker as the book progresses?

9. Friendships greatly enrich our lives. Who are Walker's two best friends in Colorado he still keeps in touch with, and what does each do for a living? In Happy Valley, Walker builds friendships with Quillen, Cameron, and Eldon Johnson. How is Quillen a help to Walker, and how is Walker a help to Quillen in return? Walker also makes friends with Jonas Rasnic, who lives nearby. How did Walker and Jonas meet? What do Jonas and his wife, Kimmie, do? Kimmie later becomes a friend to Juliette, too. How is Kimmie a help to Juliette as the book progresses? Juliette's other close friends are Sharon Bard in Murphy and Amy Boone Butler in Happy Valley. How did Juliette and Amy meet? What problems have Amy and her husband, Keith, faced? Where do they live now, and what do both do? Juliette is also very close to Amy's mother, Lenora. How has Lenora Boone been a help to Juliette, and how does she encourage and wisely counsel her later in the book?

10. Hikes and time out of doors are pleasures both Juliette and Walker enjoy. Early in the book they hike to Abrams Falls in Cades Cove. Have you ever hiked this trail or visited Cades Cove in the Smoky Mountains? What makes Walker nervous as they drive over to the cove? When Juliette quizzes him about this, what does she learn about Walker? How does Walker's reluctance to share about his past with Juliette impact their relationship? What are Walker's reasons for keeping his identity secret? Do you think they are good ones?

11. Juliette doesn't want her family to know about her relationship with Walker, beyond the fact that she works for him. Why? What scene with her brother, George, causes this secrecy to backfire? Why is George upset about Juliette dating Walker? How does Dade Claiborne react when he learns about Walker and Juliette dating? How do Juliette's grandparents' feelings for Walker change when he goes to talk with them? What other later understandings help Juliette's grandparents to like and trust Walker more as the book progresses? How is Walker a solid help when Juliette's grandfather has a heart attack?

12. Eldon Johnson, who works part-time in the store with Quillen, has been a minister all his life. How does he give Walker good advice about the problems with his relationship with Juliette? How does he use an old oxen yoke, hanging in the store, as a way to encourage Walker to grow closer to God and deepen his faith? Eldon said: "I've always thought each Christian faith holds some special nuggets of wisdom and revelation in their individual beliefs ... It's not so much which church you go to but who you are in the Lord. That's what a person needs to be most sure of—that relationship and being wrapped in the love of God and the purpose of God." Do you agree with these thoughts?

13. When do you first learn of the thieves in the valley? Who have the thieves targeted? What answers have the police found as they investigated? Juliette confides in Walker about the hurt and sorrow the thefts have caused for many in the valley. How does Walker begin to respond to some of the problems he learns about? How does Walker's friend and attorney, Barton, help with his philanthropy? Who later tries to get the people in Happy Valley to finger Harley and Vernon for the ongoing thefts? How do they respond to this?

14. Over time Walker finds more and more ways to help the people in Happy Valley through corporate foundations Burton sets up for him, like the Goodman Brothers and the RHC—Rural Help Connection. How does Walker help to renovate the community center? How does this also benefit Keith and Amy Butler? How does Walker help Juliette's brother, George, get free of debt to Dade? What are some other ways he provides help to people the thieves stole money and property from, and how does Walker later get the idea of playing Santa Claus in the valley?

15. Most people imagine a sudden unexpected windfall of wealth, as Walker experiences, can only be a wonderful blessing. How has wealth impacted Walker's life both positively and negatively? How did he get his unexpected windfall? How did the people in Greeley, Colorado, change toward Walker after he became wealthy? What events caused Walker to change his identity and leave his home, and what did he do with his house and family store in Greeley? Where has Walker traveled over the last two years? How did he find his dog,

Marsh, who becomes his traveling companion? What kind of dog is Marsh, and what are some interesting things you remember about him?

16. Juliette likes working in her friend Sharon Bard's craft shop and also loves teaching quilting at the nearby John C. Campbell Folk School. However, from the first of the book, you see that Juliette feels torn between her love for her family in Happy Valley and her life and work in North Carolina. Why is this? Missing her work, how does she begin to find a way to teach quilting while staying in Happy Valley? What part does Lenora Boone play in initiating these classes? How does Lenora encourage Juliette in her art and in her personal life? In what ways does Walker also encourage her art and teaching? Do you agree with Lenora that happiness comes from within? What other wise counsel did she offer?

17. As Christmas grows closer, Juliette decides it will be best to return to Murphy, North Carolina, in January, since Walker simply won't trust his secrets to her. How does meeting Walker's family make Juliette feel even more left out of his life than she already does? What happens unexpectedly on a winter hike that Juliette and Walker take? What does this show about the risk of hiking in the mountains in inclement weather? How do Juliette and Walker draw on their faith in this situation? The danger on this hike escalates Walker's feelings for Juliette and causes him to break down and share more of his past with her when they return. Who does he tell her he really is, and what does he tell her about why he left Colorado? How does Juliette feel about these revelations? What thoughts does she share with him the next day about his situation and about letting fear rule his life? What is Walker's response?

18. Toward the end of the book, two ongoing situations finally get resolved: the identity of the thieves in Happy Valley and the identity of the man who has caused so much trouble for Walker. Who do you learn is behind the thieving in the valley? Who helps the police to catch the thieves? How had the thieves been stealing from the people in the valley? Are people shocked to learn who is behind the valley's thefts? Not long after this revelation, Juliette learns from Eldon Johnson that Walker has flown to Colorado unexpectedly for an emergency. In the days to come she hears nothing from him, upsetting her. When he returns at Christmas to Juliette's home, what does he reveal to them all? How does Juliette respond when she learns Walker's problems are finally over and resolved and that the man stalking and threatening him is dead? Where does Walker find Juliette when he goes after her? What does he give her, and how does the book end?