Readers’ Guide

The Boy From Nowhere

**Why do we tell stories?** Niall Williams said that we tell stories, “…to leave the world for a little while or go more deeply into it. We tell stories to heal the pain of living.” Does *The Boy From* *Nowhere* leave us with hope or despair?

**Insiders v. Outsiders**: What values/attributes/beliefs are revered in the community? What barriers do outsiders face, and are those barriers culturally consistent?

**We’re only as sick as our secrets**.

Connection cannot occur without vulnerability. Good writing opens the reader and the writer to vulnerability. Do you support that idea?

**Fiction v. Non-fiction**: How important is it to know that the events portrayed in memoir story telling are true? Tim O’Brien, in his book, *The Things They Carried*, says it this way, “…story-truth is truer sometimes than happening-truth.”

**How true are our memories?** Emotional truth v. historical accuracy. Our memory is always biased by gender, socio-economics, age, race, empathy, education, etc. How important is it that our memories are true, and who is to say? Also, what anchors our memories? Time and place, tastes, smells, sounds?

**How have parenting styles changed?** A young teenaged reader responded to the episode with the frogs: “How did his parents not know what he was doing? My parents know when I’ve eaten an unhealthy snack.”

**Bullying**. Has the public awareness of the damage caused by bullying changed the behavior of young people? Is it possible that bullying those most vulnerable is simply a part of human nature? To what end?

**Upward mobility,** especially post WWII, was presented as available to anyone willing to work hard. At least that was the message then. Was it true? Is it true today? For whom? Is it realistic for today’s children to expect to have a better, easier life than that of their parents? How is *better* defined?