

LITERARY BOOK CLUB

May 2018 Selection

***The Twelve Lives of Samuel Hawley* by Hannah Tinti**

Samuel Hawley isn't like the other fathers in Olympus, Massachusetts. A loner who spent years living on the run, he raised his beloved daughter, Loo, on the road, moving from motel to motel, always watching his back. Now that Loo's a teenager, Hawley wants only to give her a normal life. In his late wife's hometown, he finds work as a fisherman, while Loo struggles to fit in at the local high school.

Growing more and more curious about the mother she never knew, Loo begins to investigate. Soon, everywhere she turns, she encounters the mysteries of her parents' lives before she was born. This hidden past is made all the more real by the twelve scars her father carries on his body. Each scar is from a bullet Hawley took over the course of his criminal career. Each is a memory: of another place on the map, another thrilling close call, another moment of love lost and found. As Loo uncovers a history that's darker than she could have known, the demons of her father's past spill over into the present—and together both Hawley and Loo must face a reckoning yet to come.

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Discussion Questions:

1. The central relationship in this story is the one between Samuel Hawley and his daughter, Loo. In what ways are they similar, and in what ways are they different? How do Hawley and Loo evoke the special bond between fathers and daughters?
2. So much of this story begins at “The Greasy Pole.” What did you like about this particular chapter? How does it color your understanding of the distinctive town of Olympus, Massachusetts? How does it shift your perspective of Hawley, as a father and as a man?
3. Discuss the theme of secrets. What are the secrets that drive the action of the novel? How do secrets bring characters together? How do they drive them apart?
4. So many great stories are founded on the distinctions between heroes and villains, but in this novel, the line between the two is not so easily discernable. Who do you feel are the heroes of this story? Who are the villains? How did this novel make you rethink how you define good and evil?
5. Discuss the structure of this novel. How does the switch between past and present contribute to the arc of the story? How does it deepen our understanding of Hawley and Loo, and connect these two very different coming-of-age stories?
6. In this novel we are taken on a road trip across America. How do the themes of travel and searching play a role in this story? Which setting did you enjoy the most? When Hawley and Loo finally settle in Olympus, how does this new, permanent home impact them?
7. As we get to know Hawley and Loo, we begin to understand that “Loo’s mother had been dead for years but she had never been invisible.” How does Lily play a role in the novel, even though she is no longer with her husband and daughter? How does her absence drive their actions and motivations?
8. While so much of this novel concerns the stories of relationships between characters, there is also great significance in the relationships between these

characters and nature—for example, Lily and Loo’s fascination with the stars, or Hawley’s interactions with a whale. How does the natural world contribute to the story lines of these characters and help them find their places in the universe?

9. This novel focuses on the love between a parent and child, but there is also romantic love between Hawley and Lily, Mary Titus and Principal Gunderson, and especially Loo and Marshall Hicks. Do you think any of these romantic relationships are successful? Why do you think Lily stays with Hawley? How does Loo’s bond with Marshall change her?
10. Objects carry immense significance in this novel, from the watches to the star map to the bathroom shrine of Lily’s things. For Hawley and Loo, these objects represent important memories. How do these pieces of the past influence the present? How do characters’ memories help or hurt them? Which objects did you remember the most after you’d finished reading the book?

Review or Comment about this book:

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Recommendations:

- If you liked *The Twelve Lives of Samuel Hawley*, you might like *Ginny Moon*
(<http://www.booksamillion.com/p/9780778330882>)
- You might also enjoy *This Dark Road to Mercy*
(<http://www.booksamillion.com/p/9780062088260>)