



## Reading Guide Questions

### The Things That Keep Us Here

by *Carla Buckley*

With the onset of the pandemic why do you think some people's behavior changed for the better and others for the worst? How do you think you would act in a similar situation?

In the story Ann chooses to not take her best friend's baby because of the flu, thereby condemning him to an almost certain death. Peter intervenes and takes the baby. What do you think that you would do in a similar situation? Does Peter's behavior reflect a faith?

Ann concluded that Peter and Shazia were in love and having a baby. Are there other instances in the book where taking the situation at face value led to wrong assumptions?

Carla Buckley portrayed almost all of the other characters in the book in the worst possible light. Did she do this to contrast Peter's behavior or do you think that people would behave this way in a dire situation?

Is the character of Ann written as strong or selfish?

Peter tried by example to draw his neighbors together in the spirit of helping each other through the crisis by voluntarily picking up the garbage for the street and taking it to the dump. Do you think they all would have survived longer if they had combined resources and helped each other, putting aside their fears? How do you think you and your neighbors would react in a crisis like this?

In the story, Ann demonstrates a willingness to do anything for her children. Identify the moral choices she made in doing so. Do you agree with her choices?

The book illustrates that when a disaster hits, people don't always have time to prepare. Are you prepared for a disaster of this magnitude? Why or why not?

At the end of the book, Kate indicates a reluctance to commit to Frank. Did you anticipate this? Why or why not?

How do you think the death of her infant son affected Ann's reaction when her neighbors brought their baby to her doorstep as they were dying?

1. How does the death of William shape both characters and plot development in the novel?

2. Even while we understand Ann's fears when Jacob is placed on her doorstep, how do you think you would act under the same circumstances?

How would you draw the line around family in a true pandemic?

Would you turn your back on your infected best friend and her possibly infected infant?

Is it better to stay isolated as a family in a pandemic emergency or is it better to band together with other neighbors and why?

Which hardships that the characters had to endure would be the most difficult for you? Why?

How did Barney affect the storyline? Why do you think the author included him in as many scenes as she did?