

## Discussion Questions: The Giving Quilt, by Jennifer Chiaverini

### Rebecca's questions (Baldwin Library, WI)

1. How does this author compare to others like Maeve Binchy in her style and aim? What might be her purpose in introducing us to different characters' lives?
2. Have you read others from this series? Do you prefer to follow regular characters or meet new ones in a series?
3. Do these books inspire you to try quilting at all? Have you quilted before?
4. Recall the history of quilting in our country. What have quilts meant to many?
5. Have you ever gone on a women's retreat? Why are they so nice for women?
6. Reading Pauline's chapter, did you think of a similar situation in your life? Is personality conflict inevitable in any group? What are some ways to handle that?
7. When you first read Jocelyn's chapter, did you remember she was black? How often do we get to know middle-class, professional black characters in fiction, TV, etc?
8. Talk about how anger is often a part of grief when losing someone.
9. Would you have made the same decision Karen did, or taken the teaching job?
10. Do you think the boys purposely dropped Michaela? Does it matter?
11. Is it ever right to censor/ban a book, as in Linnea's story about her library?
12. Do you know any public workers who faced attacks like in Mona's chapter?
13. Discuss these quotes: "Choose mercy over justice." "Some people seemed to not be able to see beyond their own house" (about Taxes)
14. A theme seemed to be that sometimes we have to stumble around until we find the right path. Can you relate? How do we know if we are in the right direction?
15. The women seemed to mostly show great generosity, grace, maturity, positive thinking....Do these women seem like ones you might know? Did you like them?
16. Have you ever tried a Gratitude or Giving Journal? How might they be useful?
17. Did you learn anything new about some of the situations or issues addressed (e.g. loss of a spouse, disability, supporting small local businesses, interpersonal conflict, teachers, public workers, library workers, forgiveness, adjusting our expectations...)

## Publisher's questions

1. Friendship is a central part of the Elm Creek Quilts series. Sylvia reflects on friends she's made through the Elm Creek Quilters and muses about how to fully define the word "friend." How would you define a friend?
2. Sylvia describes the manor as a "sheltered place, a haven from the chaos of the disappointments of ordinary life." Discuss the new characters introduced in this novel and the reasons they have come to visit Elm Creek Manor.
3. Pauline's desire to be liked and accepted seems to lead to more conflict than acceptance. How might you have handled the situation with Brenda?
4. The quilters are asked why they give. What did you make of their responses? Why do *you* give?
5. At one point, Linnea invites a fellow quilter into her group, noting to herself how "demoralizing it is to be the leftover, the one not chosen, the one not noticed but assigned by default." At some point or another, each of the new quilters feels leftover or overlooked. Does this change by the end of the novel? How so?
6. Pauline seems to approach the week at Elm Creek Quilt Camp as more of a competition than a giving opportunity. Do you see a change in her attitude at all?
7. Sylvia speaks of the importance of stories and their use in teaching, learning and "making sense of the world around us." How do stories influence your world?
8. In the spirit of this story, think about what a journal entry would be in your Giving Journal. Share ways that you give of yourself. Who are you especially grateful for?
9. Each woman faces some kind of challenge in the novel. Which character do you think faced adversity with the most aplomb? The least? What personality traits do you think are the most helpful to have when dealing with difficulties?
10. This book focused mainly on new characters in the series. Did you have a favorite? Who, and why?

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