



Discussion Questions for Paul Lynch's GRACE

- 1) Why does Sarah wake Grace up in the middle of the night to cut her hair? Why do you think the author chose for the cutting to take place on the killing stump?
- 2) Colly gives Grace the matchbox full of her lost hair and references the story of Samson, whose strength came from his hair. Did you notice any other biblical references in the novel?
- 3) Do Colly's riddles throughout the novel have significance, or are they just lighthearted banter? Why do you think Grace never answers the riddles? Do you think they have answers?
- 4) What do you think is the source of the connection that Grace feels to Bart upon first meeting him?

- 5) Grace often says that men only bring trouble. Why do you think she feels this way? How can we reconcile this with the fact that she herself is forced to pose as a man for much of the novel?
- 6) Bart is a survivor, strong and skilled despite his disability. What do you think of his desire, as he tells Grace, to die “nobly” like a dog, alone and away from home (277)?
- 7) Colly repeats several times throughout the novel, “This is no way to live.” What do you think this means, particularly coming from Colly?
- 8) Bart tells Grace that hope “keeps you in your place. Keeps you down.” What do you think he means by this? Do you agree?
- 9) Grace hears Colly speaking to her even when he isn’t with her. She sometimes even speaks back to him aloud. Why do you think the author made this inner dialogue part of the novel? How do you think Grace’s story would be different if she weren’t in conversation with Colly throughout her journey?
- 10) Why do you think Colly takes over Grace’s mind and body (pp. 285-295)? Why doesn’t she remember these days as Colly?
- 11) How do you think Father’s presence affects Grace, before and after he confesses her? Why does she not speak during her time there? And how is she changed when she leaves?
- 12) Why do you think Father insists that the religious women cut off their hair? What did you think of Grace’s refusal to have her hair cut off again?
- 13) How does Grace understand Sarah differently at the end of the novel than she does at the beginning? What do you think is the significance of the scene at the river?
- 14) What do you think of end of the book? In what ways was it similar to or different from your expectations of how Grace’s story would conclude?