

Discussion Questions:

- 1) Why do you think the author chose to give Lewis a fictional condition instead of a real one?
- 2) Wren and Lewis are quite different from each other and yet, love each other deeply. Have you ever been close to someone who sees the world differently? What are the gifts and challenges of these types of relationships?
- 3) As Lewis gradually becomes a great white shark, how do his personality changes strain his work and marriage? Beyond the world of the book, how do the ways people naturally change over time challenge or enhance relationships?
- 4) At Lewis's "send off," the partygoers "discovered the same private truth: Lewis and Wren's situation made them feel better about themselves" (page 136). What do you think this statement says about humanity's general attitude toward suffering?
- 5) Lewis realizes that "joy and grief are human birthrights, but mostly, being alive is everything in between" (page 152). Do you agree? Why or why not?
- 6) At the ocean, Lewis tries to explain his transformation: "It's like standing in my childhood bedroom..... There are things I cannot unsee" (page 158). What do you think Lewis cannot unsee? What places in your life remind you of how much you've grown?
- 7) George always loves Angela, never wavering in feeling that she was the love of his life, even though they are not together. What do you think about his unrequited love from afar? What is the hardest part about loving someone who is still alive but no longer in your life?
- 8) Why might Angela have taught Wren to ask herself the question: "What do I need?" What does this question provide Wren? Are there questions like this that you ask yourself? If so, how do they help you?
- 9) Angela feels like her body has betrayed her. Have you ever felt this way? And conversely, when do you feel that your physical body is a source of strength or protection?
- 10) How did Angela's condition prepare Wren to take care of Lewis? Was Wren's prior caretaking experience ever an impediment during her time with Lewis?
- 11) In his transformation from man to great white shark, Lewis became much more cynical, which contrasts Margaret C. Finnegan's unyielding optimism. How do these attitudes reflect the differing ways in which people adapt to change and hardship?
- 12) Why do you think Lewis and Angela have the same dream about being the stem of a pear? What do you think the dream means in each of their contexts?
- 13) The author uses a unique writing style, blending prose, poetry, and playwriting. Why do you think she chose these styles? In sections with sparsely written pages, what does the empty space evoke?
- 14) What do the transformations in *Shark Heart* say about the connection between humans and animals?

Enhance Your Book Club:

- 1) Share a time when you felt a personal connection to an animal. Or, if you could become any animal for a day, what would it be?
- 2) Upon his release, Lewis ruminates about his regrets. Create a list of things, big or small, that you do not want to take for granted or leave unfulfilled. Reflect on why these things matter to you and how you might pursue them.
- 3) Read *Our Town* by Thornton Wilder as a companion to *Shark Heart* and discuss parallels between the novel and the play.