

THE MONTH BEFORE CHRISTMAS

Discussion Questions

Dr. Pat Schuch

1. Why was turning 50 difficult for Ruth? Describe a decade birthday that was hard for you and explain why.
2. What characteristics did Sister Beatrice possess that Ruth most admired?
3. This book talks about various Christmas traditions, most of them common. What traditions in the book did you find to be the most unique? What are your own favorite holiday traditions?
4. How did Ruth's relationship with her family impact her both as a teen and as an adult? What characteristics did she possess that were typical of being the oldest sibling in a large family?
5. Which of the adventures that Ruth had as a foreign exchange student did you find to be the most memorable?
6. What were some of the world events in 1969 and 1999 that are described in the book and how did they impact Ruth? Did any of those events impact you or your family?
7. Ruth's temporary loss of freedom in East Germany had a disconcerting impact on her. Is there anything in today's current events that hint that such a condition could one day exist in the U.S?
8. Discuss Ruth's relationship with Karl. What were the biggest challenges they faced in 1969?
9. What did Ruth learn from her relationship with Karl?
10. What attributes did Karl and Dave have in common? How were they different? Why do you think Ruth broke up with Karl? Why do you think she later chose to marry Dave?

11. Describe Ruth's relationship with God. How did it impact the choices she made?
12. What part of the book did you find to be the funniest? The most memorable?
13. Which of Ruth's journal entries resonated with you?
14. What did you learn from Ruth about perseverance?
15. Why do you think Ruth was able to not succumb to peer pressure?
16. Why do you think that Ruth had a close relationship with Grandma Sophie in the U.S. and Oma in Germany?
17. Have you ever sought out an important person from your past? How did it turn out?
18. Discuss some of the mistakes Ruth made throughout the book. Why do you think she recovered from them relatively quickly?
19. Forgiveness is an important theme in the last part of the book. How did the ending impact you? Do you know of families that have been changed by forgiveness?
20. What additional themes were in the book that we did not already discuss? In the book, when were the following mentioned: Mistletoe? The moon? Electrical outlets?