

THE BOOKS OF

DANA

REINHARDT

READERS GUIDE



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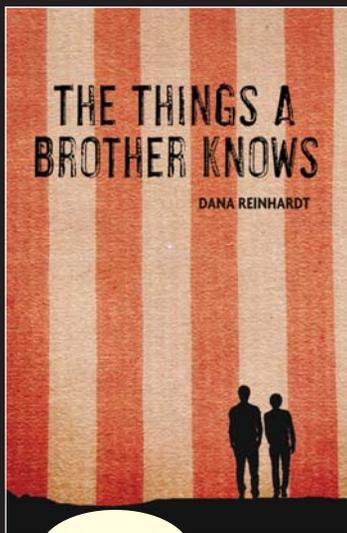
ABOUT THE BOOKS OF  
**DANA  
REINHARDT**

**DANA REINHARDT** is a master craftsman of stories with characters so full of life and humanity that they walk off of the pages into the hearts of young readers. She explores teenagers' universal needs of acceptance and finding truth while understanding that each one of them meets these needs in a way that is unique to them.

Reinhardt's novels are relevant and speak to the times in which we live. *How to Build a House* is set in Tennessee after a tornado has left thousands homeless. Her newest novel, *The Things a Brother Knows*, looks at a young man who returns from war not completely whole. The importance of family is at the core of each novel, with family dynamics changing throughout the character's journeys. In *A Brief Chapter in My Impossible Life*, Simone meets her birth mother, and in turn, experiences deeper feelings of anguish and love than she has ever known. The lie that Emma, Anna, and Mariah make up in *Harmless*, not only affects their individual families, but also the community at large.

Open the books and fall in love with the characters that live within the pages and soon within your heart.

**"WHEN YOUR WRITING IS GOING WELL, IT'S LIKE BEING IN A PRIVATE ROOM WITH ALL YOUR CHARACTERS AND THE STORIES THEY HAVE TO TELL. BUT SOMETIMES, IF YOU'RE NOT CAREFUL, AND SOMETIMES EVEN IF YOU'RE AS CAREFUL AS YOU CAN POSSIBLY BE, YOU GET CLOSED OUT OF THAT ROOM, AND YOU SPEND YOUR DAYS KNOCKING ON THE DOOR AND DOING EVERYTHING YOU CAN TO COAX IT OPEN AGAIN."—DANA REINHARDT**



**NEW!**

# THE THINGS A BROTHER KNOWS

THE STORY OF A YOUNG MARINE'S RETURN FROM WAR IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND THE PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS IT HAS ON HIS FAMILY.

GRADES 7 UP

HC: 978-0-375-84455-3 • GLB: 978-0-375-94455-0 • CD: 978-0-307-73834-9

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Boaz's decision to join the Marines is completely unexpected. How does Boaz's personal choice affect his entire family? In what ways does his return home bring the pain of Bo's choice out in the open?
- Levi copes with the idol worship of his brother by the kids and adults at school while knowing that at home his brother is not doing well. What are Levi's feelings toward Boaz since he has returned from Afghanistan? Why are his feelings so conflicted?
- How do Boaz's parents react to his isolation? What attempts do they make to reach out to their son? How has Boaz's change in personality affected their relationship?
- Zim and Pearl are so completely different, yet Levi considers them his best friends. How can they both be Levi's best friends? What does Levi gain from each of their relationships? How do the three of them form such a cohesive team?
- Levi goes to Dov with his concern for his brother. How does Dov help Levi navigate the maze of his confusing emotions to help Boaz on his journey? What decision does Levi make as a result of his grandfather's advice?
- Levi fears that Boaz's journey is a cover-up for where he is really going. How does Levi know Boaz is lying? Why does the lie cause Levi so much concern?
- Before Boaz left for the war, Levi lived in his shadow—Bo was confident, good looking, at ease with people, funny, everything Levi wasn't. When Boaz left, Levi wanted to live outside of his shadow.
- What does Levi mean when he says, "Shadows grow even bigger when cast from half a world away." (p. 113)
- From the time Levi leaves on his journey to find Bo, Levi realizes that he has a choice: only he can choose his own path. How does Levi demonstrate his ultimate choice over his immediate desire? In Loren's apartment, for example, he gets angry and wants to go home, but he chooses to sit down and listen. (p. 125) At what other times does he forego his impulses in favor of what is right? What is his ultimate choice? Does he reach his goal?
- What role does Celine play in helping Levi come to terms with the changes in Boaz as a result of his time spent in Afghanistan? Why has she been able to help him when no one else has?
- From the time Boaz returns home until Levi finds himself with his brother in Philadelphia, Levi realizes he hasn't taken the time to try to understand what Boaz has experienced. He looks up the Million Man March in Washington and realizes he isn't pro or anti; he isn't anything. What stand does Levi decide to take? When does Levi finally realize the stand he has taken?
- When Levi runs, he repeats to himself, "It's a marathon, not a sprint." (p. 78) How could Levi's mantra be a thematic statement of *The Things a Brother Knows*?

# HOW TO BUILD A HOUSE

HOW TO BUILD A HOUSE



a novel

Dana Reinhardt



In the process of building a house for a family who lost their home in a tornado, Harper finds her own way back home.

GRADES 9 UP

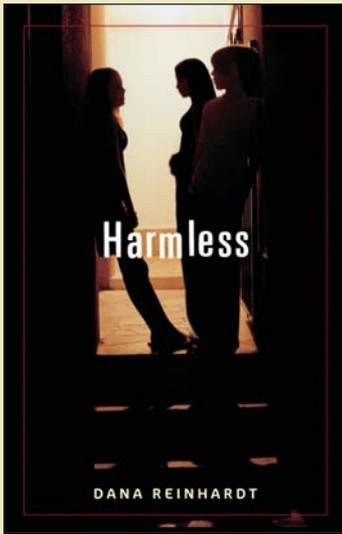
PB: 978-0-375-84454-6 • HC: 978-0-375-84453-9

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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- On page 9, Harper says she knows a thing or two about people whose homes have been destroyed. With what kind of destruction is she familiar? How does Harper's loss differ from the loss the people in Bailey have suffered? In what ways are they similar?
- When the volunteers first arrive at the building site, Linus tells the group, "Home is a sacred place. Treat it with respect." (p. 36) Based on the volunteers' previous experiences, who among them actually believe this statement? Who among them come to believe it based on their experience in Bailey? Why?
- When her family breaks apart, Harper turns to her long-time friend, Gabriel, for comfort. How does the change in Harper's relationship with Gabriel bring pain instead of comfort? How does her relationship with Gabriel affect her self-confidence and feelings of self-worth? Why?
- Why does Harper decide to volunteer with Homes for the Heart? Does she find what she is seeking? Does she achieve her goal?
- Why does Tess tell Harper the ugly truth about her dad when Jane and her father obviously wanted to keep it from her? How does Harper's reaction reflect her state of confusion and despair? At whom does she direct her anger? Why?
- When Harper sees Tess with Gabriel, something in her finally breaks. What does she realize about Tess that she has never before accepted? What long term effect does that realization have on the dynamics of their relationship?
- When Teddy plays with the band, after the group's final night on the town, Harper finds herself wanting to relive the night before it is even over, and she wants to relive it with Tess. How has Harper's separation from Tess left a hole in her no one else can fill up?
- Harper is a rule follower, but she finally agrees to go swimming at midnight with Captain. When midnight rolls around, why doesn't Harper get out of bed to go swimming? After refusing to go all summer, why does she finally swim at midnight just before everyone leaves to go home?
- As the summer draws to a close, Captain and Frances begin the break-up process, but Harper refuses to believe that she and Teddy will ever totally break up. Based on what the reader knows about Harper and Teddy—their past, their families, and their dreams—what does their future hold?
- How will Harper's cross-country trip with Tess and Rose help rebuild their relationship? What has Harper learned about herself in Tennessee that will enable her to forgive her father and Tess? How has Harper's relationship with Teddy helped her adjust to the changes in her life?

★ "[The] emotional journey will have tremendous appeal for mature teen readers."—*School Library Journal*, Starred



# Harmless

When a little white lie turns into a full-blown police investigation, Mariah, Emma, and Anna's choices may destroy their friendship and ruin their reputations.

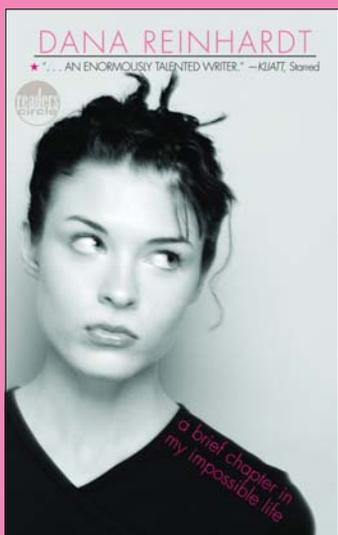
GRADES 7 UP

PB: 978-0-553-49497-6 • CD: 978-0-7393-3865-0

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- When Emma and Anna begin hanging out with Mariah, they do things that both of them know they shouldn't do. What role does peer pressure play in their decisions? Why would honest girls risk the trust their parents have in them?
- Emma says, "Parents don't really want to know the truth." (p. 37) Is this the case with all parents? Why do parents choose to believe that "their children are smart and happy and popular and out of danger" rather than face the truth about their kids? (p. 37)
- Sir Walter Scott, Scottish novelist and poet wrote, "O, what a tangled web we weave when first we practice to deceive!" How is this quote exemplified by the situation in which Mariah, Emma, and Anna find themselves?
- Anna expresses her feelings of shame and guilt at the lie she tells and how that lie is affecting her relationship with her parents. How are Mariah and Emma affected by the lie? How do they all come to realize that "lies destroy you"? (p. 194)
- Upon realization of the seriousness of their accusations, the girls react differently to the people surrounding their case. What circumstances affect the differences in their reactions to what they have done? Why does each girl react as she does?
- If it is true that something good can come from any bad experience, what possible good comes from the girls' lie? How is the community positively affected by what supposedly happens to Mariah, Emma, and Anna?
- Anna has a strictly Internet/phone relationship with Tobey; Emma has no relationship with Owen, but they have sex; and Mariah's relationship with DJ is mainly sexual. What impact do these relationships have on the girls' lie and the situation in which they find themselves?
- Mariah wants a relationship with Emma's older brother, Silas, but he thinks she is too young. How would things have been different between them if Mariah would have told him the truth before Emma told her counselor? How do Silas's actions reflect his age?
- Emma's father had been falsely charged with sexual harassment years before Emma lies about David Allen. What impact do the lies about her father have on Emma and her family? How does her father's experience help Emma face the truth?
- After the truth comes out, David Allen is released from jail. His only request is that the police do not press charges against the girls. What does this say about his character? Why would he be so willing to forgive them?

**"A psychologically taut drama."—Publishers Weekly**



# A Brief Chapter in My Impossible Life

When her birth mother suddenly enters her life, Simone questions everything she once took for granted about faith, life, the afterlife, and what it means to be a daughter.

GRADES 7 UP  
PB: 978-0-375-84691-5

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Simone says early in the book that she's never wanted to know anything about her birth family. Why is this? How does she protect herself from this information? Is it that she isn't interested in her birth family or is it that she doesn't want to know? What is the difference?
- Why do you think her parents pushed her to meet Rivka?
- Is it possible for Simone's friends to understand what she is going through?
- What are some of the examples of when they are doing a good job of lending their support to her?
- What about the moments in which Simone is being a good friend in return?
- Why doesn't Simone like Darius?
- Is the relationship between Cleo and Darius different from the relationship between Simone and Zack?
- What does it mean to have a "separation of church and state"?
- Does it matter if there is a cross on your town seal?
- Should public schools allow religious groups to meet on campus? What about a group of atheists?
- What does it mean to be an atheist?
  - Is Simone an atheist at the beginning of the book?
  - Is she an atheist at the end of the book?
  - Is Simone Jewish?
  - Can you be Jewish and an atheist at the same time?
  - Why do you think that at the very end of the book, Simone lights the candles and goes through the blessings and the rituals of Shabbat?
  - Do you have rituals in your life that are important to you?
- Did Mordechai love Rivka? Was he a good father to her?
- Was Hannah a good mother? Should she have responded differently to Rivka's pregnancy?
- How does meeting Rivka change Simone? Does it change the way Simone feels about her mother? Can you be a daughter to two different mothers?

★ "The novel deals with big issues without being preachy or sappy." — *School Library Journal*, Starred