

Born in Our Hearts Reading Guide

BOOK BACKGROUND

Compiled by Filis and Marisa Catalina Casey, a mother and daughter brought together by adoption, *Born in Our Hearts* is a heartwarming collection of true stories weaving a rich tapestry of adoption experiences. Told from various perspectives including birthmothers, adopted children, and adoptive parents and relatives, these inspiring stories reveal the challenges and joys of the lifelong adoption journey.

Chapters cover a number of relevant adoption issues such as: the pain of letting go of a child; the wonderment of meeting "your" perfect child halfway around the world; the challenges of adopting an older child; watching a child's potential flourish; sibling rivalry and bonding; integrating a child's culture into a new multiracial family; finding peace in the search for identity, roots and unanswered questions; and feeling the happiness and love that comes from forming a family.

AUTHORS' BIOGRAPHIES

Filis M. Casey, J.D. is the Founder and Executive Director of the Alliance for Children, Inc. (www.allforchildren.org) a non-profit, international adoption agency with offices in MA, RI, NY, and SC. During her agency's 30-year history, Filis has helped create and expand over 5,000 families across the United States and Europe including her own, adopting her daughter Marisa at the age of three from Bogotá, Colombia in 1982. Filis Casey is also the Executive Director of the Alliance for Children Foundation (www.afcfoundation.org), established in 2000 through a leadership gift from an Alliance adoptive family. The Foundation serves orphaned children in Asia, Eastern Europe and Latin America who because of age or special needs are less likely to be adopted.

Marisa Catalina Casey graduated with honors from Brown University in 2001. From a young age, Marisa has volunteered at the Alliance working on projects combining her interests in youth, adoption, education, Latin America, and the arts. Photographing across the US and Latin America, Marisa's images have been published in *The Providence Journal*, *Brown Daily Herald*, *College Hill Independent*, and two fundraising calendars for the Alliance, as well as a publication she designed for CARE-Peru. Continuing to collaborate with Filis, Marisa is currently working at the Alliance for Children. Marisa is co-director, co-producer, and subject of the documentary, *The Colombia Project: Two Stories of Adoption*.

Together, Filis and Marisa co-authored ***Born in Our Hearts: Stories of Adoption*** (Health Communications, Inc., June 2004, \$11.95, ISBN 0757301290), a collection of personal essays on adoption from various contributors including birthmothers, adoptees, and adoptive families. Filis and Marisa are frequent speakers and presenters at adoption conferences and have been interviewed for *The Boston Globe*, *The Boston Herald*, CNN, NPR, ABC, NBC, and CBS.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What was your experience with adoption previous to reading this book?
2. Have your perceptions about adoption changed from reading this book?
3. Discuss the ways in which the media has influenced perceptions of adoption both international and domestic.
4. Are you aware of any other books, articles, movies, or plays that deal with the topic of adoption? How does the approach the authors take in *Born in Our Hearts* compare?
5. Which story from *Born in Our Hearts* most stood out to you and why?
6. Which chapter did you relate to the most? Why?
7. What are some of the themes that run throughout many of the stories in the collection? Are these themes universal or do they only apply to adoption?
8. What did you learn about cultures different from your own?
9. Discuss what family means to you.
10. How would you write your own personal narrative regarding your own family? Which chapter would it fit into?
11. Many of the stories in *Born in Our Hearts* touch on loss. Discuss loss in the context of adoption.
12. Imagine you were told that you had been adopted and never knew it. What thoughts would run through your mind? How would you feel? Are these reactions similar or different to the experiences in *Born in Our Hearts*?
13. What would you say to a family member who approached you about adoption? Has your answer changed since reading *Born in Our Hearts*?

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

Please note that the additional resources listed below do not necessarily reflect the opinions or endorsements of the authors or the publishers of *Born in Our Hearts*.

A Child's Journey Through Placement

by Vera, MD Fahlberg

Adoption Is a Family Affair! What Relatives and Friends Must Know

by Patricia Irwin Johnston

Adoption Nation: How the Adoption Revolution Is Transforming America

by Adam Pertman

The Adoption Resource Book

by Lois Gilman

Are Those Kids Yours?: American Families With Children Adopted From Other Countries

by Cheri Register

Attaching in Adoption: Practical Tools for Today's Parents

by Deborah D. Gray

Cross Cultural Adoption: How To Answer Questions from Family, Friends & Community

by Amy Coughlin, Caryn Abramowitz

Dear Birthmother

by Kathleen Silber

I Don't Have Your Eyes

by Carrie A. Kitz

Inside Transracial Adoption

by Gail Steinberg, Beth Hall

ITHAKA: A Daughter's Memoir of Being Found

by Sarah Saffian

Kids Like Me in China

by Ying Ying Fry, et al

The Kid: What Happened After My Boyfriend and I Decided to Go Get Pregnant: An Adoption Story

by Dan Savage

LifeBooks : Creating a Treasure for the Adopted Child

by Beth O'Malley

The Lost Daughters of China: Abandoned Girls, Their Journey to America, and the Search for a Missing Past

by Karin Evans

Love in the Driest Season

by Neely Tucker

The Other Mother: A Woman's Love for the Child She Gave Up for Adoption

by Carol Schaefer

The Post-Adoption Blues: Overcoming the Unforeseen Challenges of Adoption

by Karen J. Foli

The Primal Wound: Understanding the Adopted Child

by Nancy Verrier

Raising Adopted Children: Practical Reassuring Advice for Every Adoptive Parent

by Lois Ruskai Melina

Real Parents Real Children

by Holly Van Gulden

The Russian Word for Snow: A True Story of Adoption

by Janis Cooke Newman

Secret Thoughts of an Adoptive Mother

by Jana Wolff

Shadow Mothers: Stories of Adoption and Reunion

by Linda Back McKay

Twenty Things Adopted Kids Wish Their Adoptive Parents Knew

by Sherrie Eldridge

Twice Born: Memoirs of an Adopted Daughter

by Betty Jean Lifton

Wanting a Daughter, Needing a Son: Abandonment, Adoption, and Orphanage Care in China

by Kay Ann Johnson