



# PREFACE :

The Cal Poly Shared Reading Program 2003

## READING QUESTIONS

*As you read Plainsong, consider these questions in preparation for our lively discussion of the book (as part of WOW) on September 17, 2003.*

1. How would you describe Holt, Colorado? What are its limitations, its disadvantages, and what are its strengths? In what ways is it typical of any American small town, and in what ways is it different? What does a reader expect in a story of a small town?
2. Who is your favorite character? What makes the characterization effective?
3. What makes the McPherson brothers so memorable? Why haven't they had "enough trouble"?
4. How does Haruf succeed in conveying Ike and Bobby's innocence?
5. What kinds of families are presented? Which family is the most traditionally structured? Which ones are fractured? How are they reconfigured?
6. How do the animals in the story end up connecting on the characters or the human condition? What is the correspondence between the human and animal world?
7. How would you describe the way Haruf writes?
8. The epigraph explains that plainsong is "the unisonous vocal music used in the Christian church from the earliest times; any simple and unadorned hymn, melody or air." Plainsong is set in the fictitious town, Holt, located on the high plains of eastern Colorado. Why might Kent Haruf have chosen Plainsong as the title for this novel?

*Seven  
townspeople  
whose lives  
converge in:*

**PLAINSONG**

BY KENT HARUF