

READING GUIDE

As you read *The Lovely Bones*, consider these questions in preparation for your lively discussion of the book (as part of WOW) on September 20, 2006.

- 1) Susie is killed just as she was beginning to grow up. ("I desired to know what I had not known on Earth. I wanted to be allowed to grow up" (p. 19). How does she continue to connect to life on earth? To her family, friends and Mr. Harvey?
- 2) Susie's heaven does not have a moral or religious prescription. How does the author conceive of heaven in this book? What role does it play in illuminating themes of the book?
- 3) Why does Mr. Harvey pull the Pennsylvania keystone charm off of Susie's bracelet and put it in his pocket? What is the significance of the charm in the story and as a literary symbol?
- 4) Discuss how each member of the Salmon family deals with his or her grief. Why is it so difficult for the family to grieve together? How does each member experience loneliness and solitude after Susie's death?
- 5) Discuss whether Abigail's need to leave home is really related to Susie's death or if it reflects other issues in her life. Is Abigail's choice to leave her family justified?
- 6) Susie's heaven seems to have different stages, and climbing to the next stage of heaven requires her to remove herself from what happens on Earth. What is this process like for Susie?
- 7) Alice Sebold seems to be saying that out of tragedy comes healing. Susie's family fractures and comes back together. Do you agree that good can come of great trauma?
- 8) Explain the title of the novel. Discuss the effectiveness of waiting until the end of the novel to reveal the meaning of the title.