



**THE BEAR**  
**By Claire Cameron**  
**Questions for Discussion**

A note from the author:

I wrote the first draft of *The Bear* impulsively. I didn't think about it as a novel or a finished book. I stayed in the moment and saw the world through Anna's eyes, feeling fear, frustration and joy as she did. The subsequent edits and rewrites left plenty of room for second thoughts, but I'm glad that I approached the first draft as I did. What if I'd stopped to think—is writing from the perspective of a five year old a good idea? The risk involved would have stopped me cold.

So, I wrote a draft and then tried to figure out what I was writing and why. After that, I wrote more. And rewrote. Somewhere during the third draft, I told a friend that the story was about my fear of being a parent. By this I meant the kind of fear we all experience when we fall deeply in love with someone else, be it a friend, lover, child, or partner. Because what if something happens to that person?

My friend shook her head and said, "No, you are writing about your fear of not being a parent." And I knew right away that she was right. That's an even scarier proposition. It reminds us of how little control we really sometimes have over our lives. What if something happens to a person you love and you are not around to offer protection?

While I wrote this book, I wrestled with all of these ideas. I can't keep anyone I love truly safe, just as I can't control all the things that might happen. But still, I need to keep moving forward, enjoying life and loving the people around me.

As with writing, living life is one huge risk, isn't it?

—Claire Cameron

## Questions for Discussion

- 1) Do you think Anna's parents took too big of a risk in taking their children on a canoe trip? Would you take your young children camping?
- 2) What do you think had happened between Anna's parents prior to the canoe trip? How clearly could Anna see their situation?
- 3) Is the relationship between Anna and Stick typical for children their age and gender? What kind of conflicts does Anna have with Stick, and how does their relationship alter over the course of the novel?
- 4) Anna stepped into a role of caring for Stick. Were you surprised by this? Do you think many young children would do this for their siblings?
- 5) How does Anna get back to the water's edge so that the rescuers could find her and Stick? What drives her to be able to do this?
- 6) How aware do you think Anna is of what happened during the bear attack and of the dangerous circumstances she and Stick face? Does her awareness change throughout the book? If so, how?
- 7) How does Anna cope with what happened after she and Stick are rescued?
- 8) Anna and Alex go back to visit the island when they are older. How was this return different for each of them?
- 9) What did Anna gain from going back to the island? Was this something you could have done?
- 10) How does Anna view the bear? Does her view change over the course of the story?
- 11) What did you think about reading this story from the point of view of a five-year-old child? How would another point of view have changed things?
- 12) Have you ever had an encounter with a bear or other wild animal? Share your own stories of wilderness adventure and survival.