



A Closer Look Into **Windows to the Soul**

The following comments and questions are offered as opportunities to further explore this groundbreaking debut novel.

1. The story opens with Gabe having forgotten to write “the note.” Then he fails to include in it “No funeral.” In what way do these actions foreshadow his ultimate outcome? Was there a scene in the book when you felt his inconsolable grief? If so, did you understand why he wanted to end his life? If not, what words of comfort would you have offered or how would you have advised him?
2. Others describe Gabe as a man of integrity. Yet on this day, other than wishing to keep his promise to his late wife, when do we see evidence of that quality? What ulterior motives might he have had for honoring the promise he made Irish?
3. Gabe awakens in Chapter 6 from a brief sleep—but, the best he’s had in three years. How might he have awakened a slightly changed man? Given how angels are described in the book, how might Irish have impacted her husband’s sleep? When has sleep deprivation hindered your own judgment or restful slumber helped you cope?
4. Irish is introduced in first person present. Does that technique distinguish her from the living characters, who are in third person past tense, and if so how? In Chapter 24, another angel, Mrs. Hisey, Leesie’s namesake, is written in first person present. How do their viewpoints hint at Gabe’s ultimate outcome? Irish and Mrs. Hisey are portrayed as fairly remarkable women. How do the living female characters, Willa and Charlene, differ in nature and believability from those who are angels? What—if any—stereotypical qualities are given genders?

5. How do you feel about Leesie's absence as a chapter voice? In what ways might her voice have been altered through others' recollections? Is there something you didn't learn that you want to know about Leesie? What traits did she display to indicate she might have grown up to be more like Gabe or Irish, or was she on her own trajectory? What regret—if any—do you have never knowing?
6. Cooder Ward committed a horrific crime—any parent's nightmare. How might his personality have influenced Irish's decision to befriend him? What if he'd been a sadistic thug? Is there a specific scene when the man who killed the Harts' little girl became more or less of a sympathetic character? Why?
7. How might Gabe have reacted differently to losing both his wife and young daughter if his parents had not been killed when he was a baby? What if instead of being raised in foster care, Gabe had been adopted by a loving family? In Chapter 18 Gabe's father-in-law references that infants, before they develop language, are informed through action. What if Gabe had not been riding in the car when his parents were killed? How can we unlearn childhood experiences?
8. What scenes in the book validate the title? What title would you have chosen? To you, how relatable is the reference eyes are windows to the soul? What elements of the book—if any—do you think speak to contemporary and/or controversial issues? For you, what are the underlying truths of the story? How do you feel forgiveness was addressed or explored?
9. What—if any—elements of the plot surprised you? What if Gabe had not thrown the package with the quilt in the truck bed? Or run into Jon? Or read Irish's note? Or asked to be saved? Was the owl scene in the dilapidated barn plausible? If not, why? Was Gabe's character arc credible given where he was at the beginning of the book? If so, how? If not, why? What if after the barn scene Gabe had then looked into Cooder Ward's eyes? Do you think he ever does?
10. "Hey, Jon" was always intended to be the last sentence of the story – the author's shout out to Harper Lee and *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Cooder Ward confessed to Irish that he killed a mockingbird. Why do you think Irish asked her little girl's murderer if maybe we're all mockingbirds?

The author would love to meet your book club. Please contact her to schedule an in-person, Skype or FaceTime author visit!

Diana Black, author
Diana@DEBlack.net
770.845.9800

Have you wondered where the idea originated for the book? Please read on ...

On a routine walk through her neighborhood, a 39-year-old woman hears a male voice cry, “She’s dead!” Stopping to see who spoke, she confirms she alone occupies the sidewalk. She walks a bit further and hears (*channels?*) a young couple’s story and that of a prisoner. She shivers and pulls her jacket collar around her neck and heads for home, her gait increasing until she reaches her back door and marches to her computer where she outlines the essence of the saga and hits save.

She leans back into her chair. She’s not a novelist, just a struggling songwriter—and *lyrics* aren’t even her strong suit! But she promises one day she’ll do right by the characters.

Fast-forward 30 years. The young couple, Gabriel and Irish Hart, and the prisoner, Cooder Ward, have waited patiently until the writer was ready. Now their story is a published novel for all to read.

<http://www.vabella.com>

<http://www.dianablack.net>