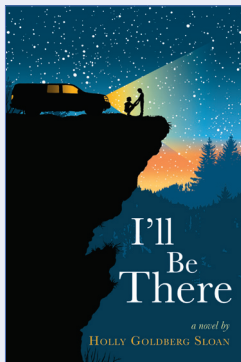


ReadingGroupGuide

I'll Be There by Holly Goldberg Sloan

ABOUT THE BOOK



Raised by an unstable father who keeps the family constantly on the move, Sam Border hasn't been in a classroom since the second grade. He's always been a rock for his younger brother Riddle, who stopped speaking long ago and instead makes sense of the world through his strange and intricate drawings. Then, Sam meets Emily

Bell. Through her he discovers love and a connection he fears can't last. Beautifully written, *I'll Be There* is a story about connections, big and small, and the way our lives so often touch and weave with many others.

1. Does Clarence have any redeeming qualities? What do you think happened to Clarence to make him the way he is?
2. What do you think Sam and Emily talked about after they were reunited on the bus? Why do you think the bus drove them to Emily's house?
3. Describe Sam and Emily's characters. Why do you think they are drawn to each other? What do they both want?
4. How are Sam and Emily's families different? Which side of the nature versus nurture argument do you think is evident in Sam and Emily, or are they a mix of both nature and nurture?
5. What are Bobby's motives for investigating Sam? Do you feel Bobby deserved what happened to him? Why or why not?
6. How did Riddle get his name?
7. The relationships in this book have a profound effect on each of the characters. Did something that happened to you in the past seem small and inconsequential, only to have it greatly impact your life later? Do you think that whatever happened to you is destiny or something else?
8. Why do you think Sam is drawn to churches and why does he love music so much? Does anything in your life make you feel the same way?
9. When Sam watches Riddle feed the kittens, he is surprised by "Riddle's secrets" (p.159). What else do you think Riddle kept secret from Sam?
10. Riddle's thoughts, more than any other character, are written in first person. Why do you think the author did this? Why do you think Riddle doesn't talk very much?
11. One of the themes of this book is belonging. Who is the last to realize where the boys belong? What happened that made this person realize it?
12. How does Sam relate to the lyrics of "I'll Be There"? What song do you relate to and why?
13. Did you like how the book ended? If you were the author of this book, would you have written any of the events differently? How would those changes affect the outcome of not only Sam and Emily, but all the other characters as well such as Hiro Yamada, Buzz Nast, and Mrs. Dairy?
14. Do you think this book would make a good movie? Who would you cast to play the characters?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Holly Goldberg Sloan was born in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and spent her childhood living in California, the Netherlands, Istanbul, Washington, DC, and Oregon. She has written and directed a number of successful family feature films. The mother of two sons, Holly lives with her husband in Santa Monica, California. *I'll Be There* is her debut novel.

