

IN PIECES

MOLLY CHASE SERIES, BOOK ONE

BY RHONDA ORTIZ

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

ONE-WORD REVIEW: Start off with your one-word review of the book or a section of the book. (Nice way to get everyone's reactions on the table.)

MOST MEMORABLE SCENE: What was the most cathartic, humorous, disturbing, or simply memorable moment in the novel? What about the scene struck you?

TRAUMA AND HEALING: Describe the trauma Molly experiences throughout the book. How does she grapple with each instance? Where does she make progress? Where does she fail?

PARENTS AND CHILDREN: Describe the various parent-child relationships in the story, both past and present. How does Molly's relationship with her mother differ from her relationship with her father? How does Josiah and Sarah's relationship change over the course of the novel? What accounts for Prudence's difficulties with Mrs. Warren? How does parenting adult children differ from parenting young children?

COMING OF AGE: Describe the maturing process that takes place for Molly and Josiah, both individually and in their relationship. How does this lay the foundation for their future marriage?

GENDER ROLES: How does *In Pieces* push against or invert eighteenth-century gender roles with regards courtship, marriage, family, and work? Where does it uphold them?

FREEDOM OF RELIGION: The signing of the Bill of Rights and the subsequent amendment to the state constitution allowed for the free practice of religion in Massachusetts, making the Christian religious landscape of 1793 Boston a complicated one. How do you see this reflected in the novel? How do the various characters approach ecumenism? In what ways do they distrust it? What would a "robust ecumenism" look like, that is, one that values theological truth? What would you think, feel, and do if, like Sarah, your child wanted to leave your religion for another?

MEANING OF SUFFERING: In Chapter Six, Molly asks Josiah and Sarah, "Would Thomas Aquinas say that God willed my father's suicide from all eternity?" How would you answer her?



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THE VILLAIN OF THE PIECE: Do you believe Daniel when he tells Molly that he's "not beyond redemption"? Why or why not?

RACE RELATIONS AND BUSINESS ETHICS: Compare Josiah and Mark Findley's complicity in slavery vis-à-vis the sugar trade. How are their attitudes and responses similar, and how do they differ?

FRIENDSHIP: Compare and contrast the various friendships in this book. Which friendships do you admire most? Which friendships do you admire least?

THE PROBLEM OF JOHN CHASE: At the end of the novel, Molly is still angry with her father for his suicide. What does she still lack? What will take for her to find peace?



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