



Discussion Questions for *Ruby Lee & Me* by Shannon Hitchcock

When a segregated North Carolina town in 1969 gets its first black teacher, two girls—one black, one white—come face-to-face with how prejudice affects their friendship. For Sarah Beth, there are so many unanswered questions. Why can't she and Ruby become best friends? And who says school isn't for anybody who wants to learn—or teach? In a world filled with uncertainty, one very special teacher shows her students and the adults in their lives that change invites unexpected possibilities.

1. Robin's tragic accident leads to many changes for her family. What are some of the ways they and their lives are altered?
2. After the accident, Sarah avoids speaking about her experience. Why do you think she finds it challenging to speak up? What kinds of emotions is she experiencing?
3. Although Sarah has always loved her sister, she doesn't realize how much until after the accident. Has your appreciation of someone or something ever changed? Explain what happened.
4. Granny says, "Keeping busy will help us through the rough patches." Do you agree? Think of a rough patch you've experienced. How did you get by?
5. Discuss Sarah and Ruby's friendship. How does their relationship evolve over the course of the story? What are the similarities and differences between the two girls?
6. After Sarah and Ruby fight, Sarah feels relieved when sending an apology note to Ruby. Think of a time you apologized. How did you feel? What did you learn from your experience?
7. The new teacher, Mrs. Smyre, invites each of her students to touch her face and hair. Why do you think she does this? How does this gesture affect her students? Explain.
8. What are some of the ways Sarah helps Robin recover? What do Sarah's actions reveal about her character? How has she grown as a character?
9. Did you find the ending satisfying? Why or why not? What do you think will happen next?
10. Discuss the varied reactions to the school integration. What challenges and opportunities will Ruby and Mrs. Smyre encounter at their new school?