

Book Group Discussion Questions

for *We, the House* by Susan Kander and Warren Ashworth

Published by Blue Cedar Press

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1. Is there a home in your past or present that carries a special resonance for you?
2. Have you ever lived in a home that you feel cares/cared about you?
3. Did you play under the dining room table as a child? Did you have a special space just for children to play in growing up?
4. Does this book make you look at the place you live in, or lived in at one time, and think about it differently?
5. Both Mrs. Peale and Ambleside share a fascination with language, its roots and specificity. Did you enjoy that aspect of the book? Do you feel their enjoyment having any effect on your own relationship to words and language?

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11. Mrs. Peale was born in 1802 and died in 1841. Her life spanned a time of unusual optimism in the early life of this country, the American Age of Enlightenment characterized by the Transcendentalists – Thoreau, Emerson, Alcott, Margaret Fuller. However, soon after she arrives in the dining room at Ambleside, she hears about the Civil War; then comes the first World War and the Second World War. Imagine and discuss what it would be like for someone of her lived experience and world view to hear about these events in human history.

12. In the chapter “Laconia”, Mrs. Peale is uncharacteristically at a loss for words to relate to Ambleside what she hears Johnny describe at length and in detail to his mother. Why?

13. In that same chapter, what happens to the experience of Time, for both you and the characters?

14. In the chapters “Mrs. Twaddle” and “Haunted”, Ambleside continues to talk to Mrs. Peale knowing she is in the basement in a crate. As you read those chapters did you think she could hear him even though she didn’t respond?