

Readers Guide for *The Language of Kin*

1. What do you understand to be Marc's argument for the importance and necessity of zoos?
2. What do you understand to be Kate's reason for arguing that zoos are immoral and unethical especially with regard to primates?
3. Did either argument surprise you? Is this an issue about which you already had feelings? If so, what were they?
4. Did reading this book change any feelings you had about zoos in either direction, especially as regards great apes in zoos?
5. Do you have a favorite character? What particularly appealed to you about him/her?
6. Have you been familiar with any deaf people personally? Do you know any American Sign Language? Did you find Honoria relatable?
7. How about autistic people? Do you know any? Were you comfortable with the depiction of Bruce? Did you feel the zoo staff understood him and did you feel you were able to?
8. Were you previously familiar with primary aphasia? Do you feel you have a reasonable layperson's understanding of it now?
9. Were you able to understand both Kate's and the Sycamore Retirement Center's point of view when at the care meeting the Director insisted that she move her mother out of assisted living and into the nursing facility. Did you find yourself "siding" with either one?
10. Have you cared for a dependent elderly parent or relative yourself, or perhaps taken part or been a direct observer? Is this something you

expect to take on in the future? How does either Kate's or Marc's experience compare?

11. How did you feel toward Eve? Did you like the way the sections of her story were presented? Were you already aware of the backgrounds of many of the great apes now in America? What did you think of Marc's approach to working with her? What about Kate's? Were you inclined to believe more in one or the other?

12. How did you react to Kate and Marc's relationship? Did you find yourself annoyed with either or wanting either to be or do something different? Was how each acted consistent with his or her character as you understood it?

13. In your opinion, did Marc do the right thing when he entered Eve's enclosure? If you saw the choice differently, what do you think would have been a better decision?

14. What was your reaction to Kate's decision regarding her mother? Would you have made the same decision, or would you be inclined to see it Marc's way?

15. Do you have a way to describe the ethical stance each took? Does either character match your own ethical standards in his or her behavior?

16. What did you think of the effect on their relationship? Was it realistic from your point of view?

17. Did you think what Vanessa (Kate's tentmate in Uganda) said to Kate was pivotal, or was Kate emotionally recovering, seeing things differently, and "ready" to work things out?

18. If you were writing a movie script for this novel, would you take the ending farther? By how much? Hours? Days? A year into the future?

How would you end it? What do you think happens between Kate and Marc and what do you think they do in the future?

19. Did any of your views or feelings change or become reinforced by reading this book?

Thank you so very much for reading, thinking about and discussing *The Language of Kin*! Of course, feel free to add to or subtract from these questions—they're just a jumping off point. I'd love to hear from you anytime. And I'm available to join all or part of a discussion by zoom or skype, facetime or in person—presuming we're geographically close—anytime, if you'd like.

Lynne