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Ruptured

by Joanne Rossmassler Fritz

ABOUT THE BOOK

The sensitive, suspenseful story of a family coping with a life-changing tragedy, told in stunning verse.

Claire's mom and dad don't talk to each other much anymore. And they definitely don't laugh or dance the way they used to. Their tense, stilted stand offs leave thirteen-year-old Claire, an only child, caught in the middle. So when the family takes their annual summer vacation, Claire sticks her nose in a book and hopes for the best. But while the family is away, Claire's mother has a ruptured brain aneurysm—right after she reveals a huge secret to Claire. Though she survives the rupture, it seems like she is an

entirely different person. With the weight of her mom's confession on her shoulders, Claire must navigate fear, grief, and prospects for recovery.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Describe Claire. Explain why she hates being thirteen, and an only child. Claire means “clear and bright, or light. Radiant”. In what ways is Claire radiant? Sofia, her middle name, means “wisdom”. How is Claire wise? Cite passages that illustrate how being “radiant and wise” is too much of a responsibility for Claire.

- Contrast Claire's mom and dad. Claire notes that her parents don't talk to one another like they once did. Describe their method of communication. How does this make Claire feel awkward? Cite times in the novel when Claire feels caught between her parents. Claire's mother tells her that she is going to tell her dad that she wants out of the marriage. Why does she share this with Claire? How does this information gnaw away at Claire? When and why does Claire decide to share this information with her dad? What is his response? Discuss how Claire is convinced that her dad still loves her mom.
- Explain why Claire hates being thirteen, and an only child. What are the characteristics of most thirteen-year-olds? Which of these characteristics fit Claire? In what ways is he different? Cite scenes in the novel that reveal how much Claire hates being an only child.
- Claire's mother suffers a brain aneurysm while the family is vacationing in Crystal Harbor, Maine. Write down the information about brain aneurysms that is in the novel. Why are the first few days so crucial for Claire's mom? Chart her long recovery.
- Caterina, Claire's grandmother, lives in California. Why doesn't Claire's dad want her grandmother to come? Explain what Claire means, "Talking to Nonna Pileggi is like listening to a soap opera" (p. 100).
- Claire's father does let his sister, Bobbi, come. How does Claire react to Aunt Bobbi? Why is Claire convinced that Aunt Bobbi can steer them back to normal? Debate whether Aunt Bobbi knows about Claire's parents' marital problems.
- There is a support group at the Portland hospital for families of patients who have suffered a brain aneurysm. Why doesn't Claire's dad want to attend? Claire meets DeShawn at the meeting. Describe the friendship that develops between the two. How does he help Claire deal with her mom's illness in ways no one else can?
- Aunt Bobbi, a well-known photographer, introduces Claire to photography. Why does Aunt Bobbi want Claire to create a phot-essay of Crystal Harbor? Explain why Claire wants to take photographs of DeShawn and his mother. How does taking photographs help Claire deal with her mother's illness?
- Claire's mom collects miniature lighthouses. She admires Blaze Island Lighthouse in a gift shop, but doesn't buy it because it is too expensive. Claire borrows money from Aunt Bobbi to buy it for her mom. Why is it so important for Claire to pay back the money she borrows? What is her mom's reaction to the gift? How does Claire know exactly where to put the lighthouse in their home?
- Describe Claire's friends. Why is it difficult for them to talk with Claire about her mother's condition? What does Claire learn about friendship when she returns to school? The school insists that Claire talk with a counselor on a regular basis. What benefits does she get from these sessions?
- Discuss the structure and style of the book. How are "Low Tide," "Midtide," and "High Tide" appropriate titles for the three parts of the book? Explain how "Low Tide" establishes the conflict. How does "High Tide" offer hope?



Joanne Rossmassler Fritz is the author of *Everywhere Blue*, which was an NCTE Notable Verse Novel, a Mighty Girl Best Book of the Year, a Bank Street Best Children's Book of the Year, and the Cybils Award Poetry Winner. She's been writing for most of her life, but didn't get serious about it until after she survived the first of two brain aneurysm ruptures. Joanne and her husband live in southeastern Pennsylvania, and are the parents of two grown sons. You can visit her at www.JoanneRossmasslerFritz.com.