

BOOK CLUB DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

BETWEEN US, POEMS BY MARGARET HASSE

1. In describing the style of poems in *Between Us*, the word “accessible” is often used.
 - What is your definition of an accessible poem?
 - In your estimation, is “accessible” a positive or negative assessment?
 - What qualities of Hasse’s poems contribute to being accessible?
2. Former poet laureate Billie Collins, in an introductory essay to the poetry anthology called *180 More*, refers to accessible poems as “easy to enter, like a building.” He continues, “An accessible poem has a clear entrance, a front door through which a reader might pass into the body of the poem, whose overall . . . availability of meaning remains to be seen and may vary widely.”
 - Look at several opening lines of Hasse’s poems. Do they provide a threshold into the poems?
3. Margaret’s poems usually have an explicit speaker or presence—a *she* or an *I*. But poetry is not synonymous with autobiography or memoir. Cite or read aloud a couple of poems in *Between Us* that seem to be the most personal, such as “August Long Ago, Longing to Be a Mother,” (page 15) or “The Old-Fashioned Names of Our Mothers” (page 17).
 - Would your experience of the poems change if you knew whether or not the poet as a person lived the experiences in each of the poems?
4. In a blurb on the back cover of the book, poet Jim Moore writes that the poems in *Between Us* “call out back and forth between the joys that fill our hearts and the sorrows that empty them . . .”
 - After reading a few poems, does this description seem apt? Why or why not?
5. What do you think of *Between Us* as the title of the collection?
 - Does *Between Us* apply to the content of the poems? Why or why not?
 - In what ways might the title refer to the relationship between the writer and the reader?