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Johnston Public Library Book Discussion Questions

The Memory of Lavender and Sage by Aimee Runyan

Summary

Food critic Tempèsta Luddington has always felt like the odd person out in her family, ever since she lost her beloved mother at the tender age of thirteen. When her workaholic father passes fifteen years later, Tempèsta is not surprised that the majority of the considerable family money will pass to her dutiful younger brother, Wal. Still, she is left a modest remembrance from her mother, and for the first time Tempèsta has a world of choices before her. Lost in grief and hoping to reconnect with her memories and her mother's past, she uses the money to buy a ramshackle manor house in Sainte-Colombe, a small village in Provence, where her mother had grown up. But she is greeted with more questions than answers. Her welcome, especially by the town's stodgy mayor, is cold at best, and she finds herself wondering if the entire experiment was a mistake. Yet she stays, stubbornly sticking it out, slowly learning that her mother's legacy was more than just a nest egg. Through her mother and the village, Tempèsta learns the value of community and friendship, the importance of self-confidence, and the power of love and trust. What's more, she sees for herself that there is magic and beauty in the everyday—even something as simple as a sprig of lavender and sage.

Discussion Questions

1. Tempèsta's father's room causes her to have some strong emotions. Why do you think seeing the space after so long an absence is so powerful to her?
2. Tempèsta has a "dream job" that many people would aspire to – a food critic for a respected New York newspaper. Why do you think she finds the work ultimately unfulfilling?
3. Tempèsta's reaction to the condition of the Bastida is extreme but perhaps more than warranted. What do you feel are some reasons from her past that might be causing her to doubt her decision so strongly?
4. What do you think is the symbolism of Sarraut's shop and its larger meaning for the town? Why do you think Estèva, and Tempèsta react so differently to the shop?
5. In several interactions, Tibèri seems as though he's afraid to trust Tempèsta. How does that mirror her own situation with her brother and grandmother?
6. Jenofa serves as a sort of soothsayer and prophet throughout the book. Why do you think she withheld the truth about Tempèsta's parentage for so long?
7. Why do you think Nadaleta rarely used her gifts when she moved to the US, despite them being so hard to detect?

8. What is the significance of the pearls from Lucille? Do you think it was right for Tempèsta not to wear them in the way Lucille intended?
9. Which of the herbs from Tempèsta's greenhouse was your favorite, and what does it symbolize?
10. What recipe mentioned in the book would you most want to try?

Summary from GoodReads.com

Discussion Questions from the publisher.