

### ***The Memory Keeper Book Club Questions***

1. One of Tomás's earliest memories is of his mother relating the *Acjachemen* creation story. When he starts school at the mission, he learns the Christian creation story and immediately sees parallels.
  - a. Did you recognize the parallels in the stories and see how Tomás reached his conclusion?
  - b. Do you know of any other cultures which have similar creation stories?
  - c. How do you think you would have reacted to hearing the two stories?
2. Tomás and his brother are very different in personality.
  - a. Can you see similar traits each of the boys inherited from their parents? Which ones?
  - b. Which brother do you most relate to?
  - c. Do you see characteristics in your siblings or yourself, which resemble your parents?
  - d. Do you react positively or negatively when you recognize a trait of one of your parents in yourself?
3. The Franciscans believed that their policy of conscripting the natives and teaching them skills to prepare them for the coming changes in society was a blessing for them.
  - a. How do you feel about the practice of converting the natives from hunter/gatherers to farmers?
  - b. How did you feel when you read about what happened to Tomás's father and his uncles?
  - c. Fidel accepted the padres' faith and became an expert tanner. Was the priests' belief in improving the Indians' lives justified in Fidel's case?
4. Tomás and his family did not live in the Indian village, but instead lived in an adobe half a league (about a mile and a half) away from town.
  - a. How did this distance shape his family life?
  - b. What do you think he and Juan missed by not living in the Indian community?
  - c. What did they gain?
5. Pikwia was stubborn about not returning to the mission, even to marry or have her boys baptized, yet when Maria needed help, she was willing to violate her most basic principle.
  - a. What do you think motivated her to return?
  - b. How did Maria change the family?
  - c. Does Pikwia's relationship with Maria change her feelings about the mission? Why or why not?
  - d. How does her change of heart make you feel about her?
6. Fidel's murder is never solved.
  - a. Do you think this was common in San Juan at the time?
  - b. Pikwia blames Juan. Was her blame at all justified? If not, why not and what other factors may have led her to this position?
7. At the end of the book, the mission itself is in ruins.
  - a. How does Tomás feel about this?
  - b. How would you?

## HISTORY QUESTIONS

8. Before reading this book, what historical events were surprises to you? Which ones, if any, had you heard about?
9. Did you know about the secularization of the missions? Did you know that John Forster purchased San Juan?
  - a. How did you feel about Governor Pico selling the missions when you read about it?
  - b. Were the Forsters good or bad for the mission?
10. Did you know about the Lincoln proclamation returning the missions to the church before you read the book?
11. During Tomás's lifetime, three different governments controlled San Juan: Spain, Mexico, and the United States.
  - a. How did their influences and attitudes about San Juan and the mission differ?
  - b. Which helped the town and the mission, and which exploited them?
  - c. Which respected the church? Which did not? Why?
12. Tomás endured some horrendous events in his lifetime.
  - a. How did he react to each event?
  - b. What effect did the terrible experiences in his life have on his faith?
  - c. How do you think you would have reacted in similar circumstances?
  - d. What factors helped Tomás to survive the losses in his life?
13. With each succeeding generation, different ethnicities became part of the fabric of the family.
  - a. Did you realize people of these heritages lived in this part of the country?
14. In the long run, do you believe the Franciscans helped or hurt the native people?