

## Reading Group Guide for *Seedlings, Stories of Relationships*

1. At first glance, *Seedlings* appears to be a collection of assorted entertaining short stories. Yet the chapters reveal emotions and connections that are prevalent in our society. What chapters resonated with you? Why?
2. How did you experience the book? Were you engaged immediately, or did it take you a while to get into it? How did you feel reading it—amused, sad, disturbed, confused? Which stories made you laugh? Cry?
3. *Seedlings* was not written as a how-to book, yet the stories are containers for tips about successful relationships. How did this affect your reading? Did it work for you? What ideas may have resonated to **use** in your relationships? Which stories gave you ideas to **nurture** relationships?
4. What is your own experience with the kinds of relationships in *Seedlings*— infatuation, long-term commitment, first child, new marriage, step-parenting, caring for aging parents, chronic illness and the impact on a family or relationship, death of a parent, self-esteem, mother-daughter? Are your experiences the same or different from the book?
5. What main ideas/themes does the author explore? Has reading this book impacted what you might read or how you may view your current relationships? Has it changed your perspective about relationships?
6. Does the author use a single viewpoint or shifting viewpoints? Why might the author have chosen to tell each story the way she did—and what difference does it make in the way you read or understand it?
7. The chapters of *Seedlings* are brief in page count yet serve to tell stories that hold emotional impact. How did this affect your reading of the book? What passages—narrative or dialogue—struck you as insightful or profound? Are there stories you found contrived or overworked?
8. The author uses the metaphor of a garden for both her “garden of stories” in culling, watering, and watching her stories grow, and in nurturing relationships. How do the sections of the Seeds, Shoots, and Blossoms fit this metaphor?
9. The author uses humor through self-deprecation. Discuss the tone of this device. Do you think the author achieved the effect of entertaining along with possible relationship suggestions? Is egocentricity also one of the author’s traits? Part of the charm?
10. Discuss the author’s relationship with her husband Hank. Would you like to be Hank?
11. Which story did you enjoy the most? Why? The least? Why?
12. For a book club it might be fun to view the YouTube videos: Introduction to *Seedlings*, and reading excerpts: “Losing Things” pp.42-45, “Big Al” pp.54-57, “A Rose for Karen” pp.87-94, and “Leave-Taking” pp.148-153. [www.youtube.com/etheleemiller](http://www.youtube.com/etheleemiller)
13. If you could ask the author a question, what would you ask? Have you read other books (*Thinking of Miller Place: A Memoir of Summer Comfort*) by the author? If so, how does this book compare? If not, does this book inspire you to read others?