



## **BAKER'S BLUES** DISCUSSION GUIDE

By **Judith Ryan Hendricks**

### **Synopsis**

For the last several years Wyn Morrison has been more businesswoman than baker, leaving the actual bread making to others. Until a 5 A.M. phone call turns her world upside down. Mac, her ex-husband, has died. The news leaves her profoundly shaken, as she finds that the fact of divorce offers no immunity from grief. Turning again to her bakery, she will come to terms with the past and re-discover the lessons of bread that she learned at the Queen Street Bakery in Seattle...that bread is a process--slow, arduous, messy, mysterious--and best consumed with the eyes closed and the heart open.

1. Why do you think the author chose to begin the novel with the death of one of the main characters?
2. Points of view alternate between Wyn in first person and Mac in third person, and the story is divided into three main sections subtitled NOW, THEN, and AFTER. What do you think is the reason for writing it this way? How would the reading experience have been different if it had been told in straightforward chronological order with one omniscient narrator?
3. While this novel does not contain recipes like the first two in the series, there's still plenty of food preparation and eating going on. What function does food have in the story? How does the act of baking, especially wood-fired bread baking, serve as a metaphor for the novel's events?
4. Irony is defined as a situation or outcome different from what is expected or desired, unintended consequences. What events in *Baker's Blues* might be described as ironic? What symbols reinforce the irony?
5. In some novels, the characters' occupations are peripheral rather than integral to the story. Is that the case with Wyn, Mac, CM, Tyler, Alex, Sarah?
6. Over coffee one afternoon, Sylvia tells Wyn, "I want to be completely truthful with you, dear. Living with a depressive is harder sometimes than being a depressive. It's like walking through a field of sunflowers that's also a minefield." How successful is Wyn at coping with Mac's depression? What are the differences between the way she deals with Mac's affliction and the way Sarah's husband Bill handles his wife's cancer?
7. It takes Mac a long time to admit that he suffers from depression and to seek treatment for it. Why is that?
8. How does the appearance of Skye with her vulnerability and unconditional acceptance of him impact Mac's ability to come to terms with his past?
9. How did you interpret the novel's ending? What questions remain unanswered in your mind and how do you think they might be resolved?