



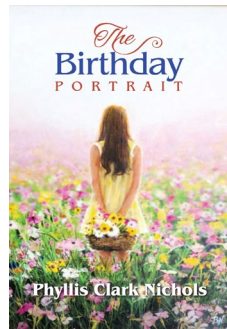
Greetings from Phyllis  
Let's swap stories over a cup of tea.

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DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR  
**THE BIRTHDAY PORTRAIT**

By Phyllis Clark Nichols



- This book is written in the first-person perspective and in the voice of eleven-year-old Katherine Joy. How might the story have unfolded differently if told in the voice of Granny Grace?
- Kate is desperately trying to preserve the tradition of her "Book of Life." What were some of the significant elements of that tradition?
- Kate gets another life's-not-fair lesson when her classmate gives his face and his name to poverty and injustice. What questions and thoughts entered Kate's mind as she is learning this lesson?
- Kate gets in trouble at school when she expresses her anger inappropriately. Is anger ever a good and proper response to bullying and unfairness?
- What was Kate taught from being disciplined? Who were her best teachers of those lessons?
- Discuss the conversation Kate has with Mister Josh while gathering wildflowers in the forest. How were the flowers and their meanings significant to the story?
- Why do you suppose Kate is so captivated with photography and taking photographs?
- This is a story of family life: a blend of joy and sorrow, loss and new life, the joy that children bring, the sage wisdom the elders offer, the value of family traditions, the importance of faith, and the mystery of life that transcends and remains unanswered. Discuss some scenes that illustrate these themes.
- With which character do you most identify? If you had read the book ten years ago, would your answer have been the same?
- Step into the picture on the front cover. What does it say about Kate and the story?