



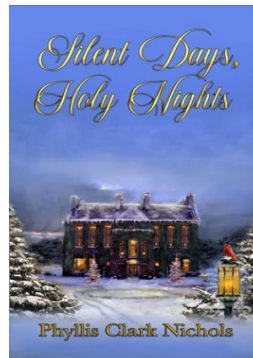
Greetings from Phyllis  
Let's swap stories over a cup of tea.

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DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR  
**SILENT DAYS, HOLY NIGHT**

By Phyllis Clark Nichols



- Why do you suppose Mr. Lafferty chose to carve birds rather than some other animal?
- What does Julia's learning of sign language say about communication? About learning someone else's language? How does learning more about a person's life experiences and background affect communication?
- Julia has a way of interjecting short, sentence prayers. What does this say about her understanding of God and how to pray?
- In deaf culture, someone else must assign your sign name. You're not to give yourself that name. You might provide copies of the American Sign Language alphabet (available on the Internet). Talk about Julia's sign name and how it was given. You might get your attendees to practice forming the letters with their hands and think about the significance of sign names. Or have them work in pairs or small groups to assign sign names.
- Could there be some symbolic meaning of "chromatography" in Chapter 3? What has this to do with the story and the changes that will take place in the characters' lives?
- One of Julia's proudest moments was when she realized she had taught *H* how to hug. What is the significance of that moment.



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- And the final and important question: We live our lives fluidly with one day dissolving to the next, but we remember our lives in moments. There was a defining moment in Julia's life, and it changed her life forever. One moment changed Mr. Lafferty's life. You might talk about the significance of "defining moments."
- You might consider closing with the poem on page 194. Oh, and those pound cake cookies are some of my favorites - and I especially like them with the cherries at Christmas time. You might serve those with a cup of tea or coffee.