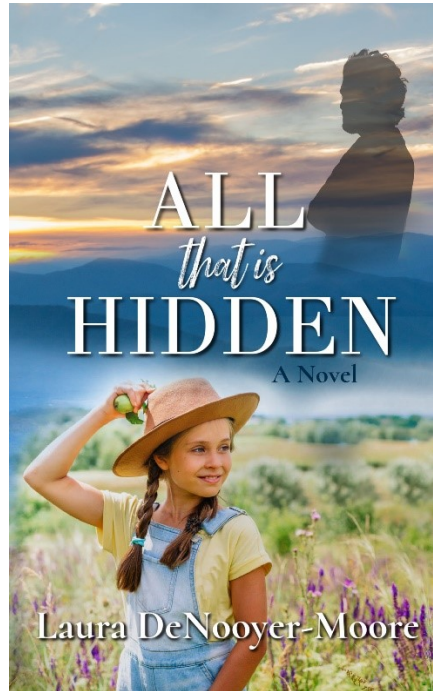


All That Is Hidden
Book Club Resources



Dear Reader,

Thank you for choosing to read and discuss my book, *All That Is Hidden*. I am honored.

Participation in book groups has been fodder for my own personal growth and imagination for decades as fellow readers wrestle through the challenges and emotions of each book.

I would be thrilled to visit your group as a guest author, either in person or via Zoom. Just contact me through this blog or at lauradenooyer@gmail.com.

Happy reading!

Laura DeNooyer

P.S. You can watch the book trailer here: Youtube.com/watch?v=9LHhYh8SDQU

Inspiration for *All That Is Hidden*

When I was a Calvin College sophomore, Dr. Besselsen took a group of education majors to Mars Hill College in western North Carolina for an interim class. Mars Hill is a town not unlike [Andy Griffith's Mayberry \(Mt. Airy, NC\)](#). It's a place of [Smoky Mountain traditions and bluegrass music](#).

What we expected was three weeks of teacher aiding in the mountain schools. What we didn't expect was being mesmerized by the college's resident storyteller.

In the evenings, we sat around listening to his lively renditions of "Jack and the Northwest Wind" and "Sody Sallyraytus." This bearded, white-haired man, Richard Chase, spun his yarns with bewitching blue eyes, dramatic tones, and perfect timing.

Years earlier, in the 1940s, author and folklorist Richard Chase gathered the southern Appalachian Jack Tales and Grandfather Tales into two books, finally putting the oral tradition into written form for all to enjoy.

In January, 1978, he brought these tales to life in the college lounge for us unsuspecting students held captive by his storytelling magic.

He didn't merely make the stories come alive. He thrust us into a time when oral tradition was valued, when it was the only way stories were passed down through the generations.

Back in those days, stories weren't just fanciful ones, such as when Jack uses magic words to produce a hearty meal. Folks also told family anecdotes about frugal Great-grandma, eccentric Uncle Billy, or flighty third cousin Ruby Mae. Both adults and youth were happy to sit for hours at the feet of elderly storytellers, soaking in their wit and wisdom. This suggests a time of family ties, conversation, joy in one's work, and valuing one's simple heritage. And contentment. A far cry from nowadays.

Visiting North Carolina was life-changing for me. Not only because of Richard Chase's stories, but because of local people we interacted with, folks who epitomized these attitudes. We met Mr. Woody, a woodworker who so enjoyed making chairs that he couldn't tell you how much time it took to make one chair. Or five. Or ten. Not interested in competing with assembly line furniture factories, he still made chairs the way his family had done it for generations.

We met the blacksmith, who took time to demonstrate his craft while sharing the ways that Christ is like iron, emphasizing the Bible's claim that Christ will rule with a rod of iron.

We learned mountain clogging, loitered at the general store playing checkers, and hiked the Appalachian trail. Everywhere we turned, we met content and joyful people, a far cry from those who chase after the rags-to-riches American Dream, stumbling up the ladder of success.

I learned more than the school children did. As we met people and explored the area, I was struck by the number of folks who created meaningful lives by a route much different from those seeking prosperity. As granddaughter of a self-made businessman, this was foreign to me. It changed the way I thought about work, play, goals, and success.

Back at home, I read all the Jack Tales and Grandfather Tales from the library. Later, I purchased those two books as a memento of January, 1978. They remind me of lessons learned in North Carolina.

My time there evolved into a tale of my own that needed to be shared. As I reflected on our visit, I wondered, "What if there was a clash between big-city northern values and southern Appalachian culture?" This led me to write a short story inspired by people we met on our trip. I submitted it the Good Groceries contest. (I think it was called "Good Groceries" because at the time, the \$25 prize would buy a bag of groceries.) It won 1st place, published in Calvin's student magazine.

Even after I tucked the story away, memories of the people and their Appalachian hills stayed with me through the years, beckoning me to revisit their towns and hollows, daring me to dig deeper into their lives.

Five years later, I read it again. Dissatisfied with it as a short story, I determined it could be a good novel.

After fifteen years of researching and writing (in my spare time between work and parenting), *All That Is Hidden* was born—[with the help of my writers group](#). I consider it my fifth child.

Strategically placed in each section is a family story told by one of my characters, stories that embody and accentuate each part of the plot. That's my nod to Richard

Chase. That's my effort to recapture the stirring moments when he placed a group of college students under his spell.

After finishing the first draft, the journey had just begun. Writing a novel is one thing; revising and editing is quite another. Then there's the publishing process. [It all involves a lot of time, sweat, and risk.](#)

My book is dedicated to both Mrs. Haan and Dr. Besselsen.

Mrs. Haan, my second grade teacher, gave me my love of writing.

Dr. Besselsen gave me my love of southern Appalachia.

Visit my "Journey to Imagination" blogpost from which this piece is adapted: lauradennooyer.com/story-worlds-places-ive-been-part-2

Book Group Discussion Questions
for All That Is Hidden
by Laura DeNooyer-Moore

1. How would you define progress and family/community values? Is what Dad said true? “Cities and big business and enterprises can only be base and depraved, despite their good intentions.” How are “progress” and family values at odds? Are they mutually exclusive? In what ways might progress impede family values and community, and in what ways might it help?
2. Folks said, “Those who took on city-ways and failed belonged to neither them (city-folk) nor to us (mountain folk).” Is it ever possible to have the best of two worlds? Do we belong to either one world or none at all? What about living in one world for a time and moving to a different one later?
3. Is Mom’s character weak or strong? She says to Tina, “When you love someone deeply, and he loves you, you don’t have to make him prove it to you by making him do something he doesn’t wanna do. That really doesn’t prove love anyway.” Is that always true? How does that apply to her situation with Drew? Was she being wise or naive in marrying a man with a silent past? Should she have insisted on knowing more?
4. Is Dad’s character strong or weak? Was Drew wise for keeping silent, or was he being selfish? Was he being a “martyr” of sorts or a coward? In what ways was he dealing with his past throughout the story, and--in retrospect--what hints are there of his secret?
5. Why did the townsfolk change their speech when speaking with Phil, other northerners, and tourists? How do we do that in ways not as noticeable as speech?
6. Childhood ambivalence: as a child, how did Tina deal with her attitudes--both loyalty and anger--toward Dad, and in observing adult conflict in general? Is there any clue as to what conclusions and attitudes she has come to as an adult? What recourse does a child have when parents are hurting her in some way and won’t listen, change, or make amends? Consider Tina’s tactics of “getting even” with her father and trying to get his attention (getting the chickens drunk, refusing to go fishing, running away). Was there anything else she could have done?

7. Ole Joe says, “Folks only rule your life if you let them root in your heart.” Is Joe referring to people taking root or to their cruel behavior taking root? Respond to both meanings and the difference between them. Discuss Joe’s remedy for dealing with conflict: “Some people have peace in the middle of the storm but I like to come in out of the rain myself.” Is this wisdom or cowardliness? Consider this in light of Joe’s role in the story.

8. Dad says, “I don’t believe that in all cases the good of the people is more important than the good of one.” In what situations might it be more important to consider the good of one over the good of many? How does that apply to Dr. Kirby’s statement, “There isn’t a whole lot worthwhile a man can do without a reputation behind him.” Does that apply to one’s own personal effectiveness or does it apply to the number of people one can influence?

9. Ross says, “Only God can forgive and forget . . . God can remove our sins farther than the east from west, but we can’t even move them to the back doorstep.” What does it mean to “forget”? Is forgiving synonymous with forgetting? How important is it to forget? Upon what basis do we determine who is “deserving” of forgiveness and who’s not? Is it harder to forgive family members than others? Why or why not?

10. Dad says, “Shame drives the point home even better, for those of us who are slow learners.” In what situations might shame work better? When might grace work better? Does shame come from within or without? Is shame possibly a “wake-up” call to danger, or grace in disguise?

11. How did Old Man Fuller keep his promise to teach Drew his craft, despite Drew’s failure to return before Old Man Fuller died?

12. What was Lucy MacNeill’s role in Tina’s life? What was Stan Randall’s role? What do each of them represent?

13. Was Ross right or wrong when confronting Dad, challenging him to take the park job? What is ironic about this confrontation? Were Dad’s reasons and motivation for not taking the park job clear and justifiable at the end? In other words, was Drew’s attempt to keep Phil from making the same mistake of wrong priorities that Drew had made thirteen years earlier his only way of finally taking responsibility for Todd?

14. Things are not always what they appear to be--even on the moon: Ole Joe as

comrade vs. enemy, Denny McLain's "fluke" season, Dad and his past, the man in the moon vs. a flag and orbiter on the moon. When have you trusted appearances and regretted it later? How do you decide when to give the benefit of the doubt?

15. How does the moon function as a symbol throughout the story? Consider Dad's secrets as well as the folklore references to the moon versus the 1960s space race.

16. What is the significance of the old family stories incorporated throughout, at the beginnings of Part I, II, III, IV, and V? How do they correspond to the unfolding of events? (Old Man Fuller, Giants and Moonshine, Vittles and Courting, Bear Dogs and Mercy, Ginseng and Good Neighboring)