

**Reading Group Guide for
Light from Distant Stars
by Shawn Smucker**

(Spoiler alert—these questions assume you’ve already read the book)

1. What do you learn early on about the relationship between Cohen, his father, and his childhood religion?
2. Names are very important to me, and I always try to choose names that carry meaning. How does it impact your view of Cohen Marah to know that his name means “priest bitter”?
3. Cohen’s first confession comes in chapter 14. How did you feel about Father James? How do you feel about the practice of confession? What about these interactions surprised you?
4. Cohen first sees the Beast in chapter 19. Are there unexplained events from your own childhood? How do you choose to remember them?
5. The names of the siblings in the story, Than and Hippie, are derived from the Greek gods Thanos and Hypnos, the gods of death and sleep, respectively. How does this affect your view of their role in the story?
6. When Cohen returns to his father’s apartment after fighting the Beast and getting injured, his father is sleeping. Even when he’s awake, he seems to disregard Cohen’s state. Have you ever felt like God was disregarding your pain? How did you handle it?
7. When Cohen’s mother shows up at the hospital, her presence sends him off balance. Did you think Cohen’s response to her was fair? Have you ever had a similar experience? Why do you think Cohen and his sister have such different views of their mother?
8. What did you think about the Beast by the time Cohen shoots him in chapter 40?
9. When Cohen’s mother begins singing as his father is disconnected from life support, what did you think of her? Did you find her annoying or comforting?
10. What did you think of Cohen’s changing view of the painting in the chapel? Would you explain it as a miracle or as a change in how Cohen sees it? Or both?
11. What similarities did you notice between the painting and the last scene, where Cohen and his nephew are playing catch?
12. How did the birth of Kaye’s twins impact Cohen?
13. What did you think about Cohen washing his father’s body?
14. If you could see into the future, which of the characters would you like to know more about?