

**Reading Group Guide for
What Momma Left Behind
by Cindy K. Sproles**

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

1. *What Momma Left Behind* opens with the death of Worie's mother. Worie is thrown into a number of situations she never expected: dealing with suicide, running a homestead on her own, and being what she feared most—an orphan. How do you think she handled all these hitting her at once? How does her anger resonate with feelings you may have had in hardships you faced?
2. Worie tries to understand why her mother took her own life. Her brothers had caused their mother hurt and pain, and Worie begins to wonder if she did the same. Do you think her worries are warranted, or are they an overreaction? Why?
3. I take special care to make my characters individuals you would develop a personal relationship with. Discuss anything that crept up on you about each character. Do you think the character should have done something different?
 - a. Louise Dressar—Her death was truly a question in the beginning of the story. Did you begin to put the pieces together before the end as to why she took her life? Why do you think she kept her good deeds of caring for the orphans a secret?
 - b. Worie Dressar—She loves both of her brothers, but she is torn between their lack of responsibility and honesty. What did you glean from her relationship with them? Were you surprised at her hidden desire to see the three of them become a true family?
 - c. Calvin and Justice Dressar—Outside of the obvious flaws these two men possessed, what do you think drove them both to such different lifestyles?
4. In the beginning, Worie can only think of how she will manage, but then she steps up to help the children. What do you think caused her change of heart toward them?
5. At first Pastor Jess seems almost cocky and pushy, but as time goes on we see his internal conflict of being a pastor and being protective of Worie. Why do you think he and Worie never married yet remained true friends? Do you think they loved each other?
6. The sheriff never really apologizes to Worie for taking the children. Do you feel his part in that was thought out before it took place? Do you think he did enough to resolve the issue? Why or why not?
7. What twist in the story surprised you the most?
8. Ely and Bess were lifelong friends of Worie's parents, yet they did not share their true connection to her mother and grandmother until they had to. If Worie had known that connection, do you think it would have led to a different outcome? Why or why not?
9. Throughout the story, Worie continues to take in children, and by the end she has basically built an orphanage. My heart in this story is to bring to light the necessity of fostering and adoption in our own country. Do you feel the story drives that point home in a subtle way? If you know someone who longs to have children but cannot, do you think they could relate to Worie? If so, how?

10. Forgiveness is not always easy to offer. Scripture tells us the importance of forgiveness and that it is something we should always offer, even when the other person is not receptive. Worie offers Calvin forgiveness. She wants him to know they could still be a family and that she loves him. Were you surprised at his response? Why or why not?

Thank you so much for the gift of your time as you read *What Momma Left Behind*. I hope that through this story you see not only the hardships of the mountain people but also the deep family ties even with those who wander. This is the heart of those reared in the Appalachian Mountains. Family, faith, and love . . . despite hardship.

One last thought. My grandmother used to always tell us, “Wrongs don’t make a right, but lovin your family despite theirselves is always right. It might turn their ways and it might not, but don’t never let the sun go down on your anger. That’s in the good book. Regret is an ugly bedfeller. You best remember, it’s always better to offer forgiveness, ’cause when that person who did you wrong is gone, they ain’t no fixin what shoulda been fixed, and you live with it the rest of your days.”