



# Colorado Book Club Resource

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR THE HONEY BUS : A MEMOIR OF LOSS, COURAGE, AND A GIRL SAVED BY BEES BY MEREDITH MAY

1. *The Honey Bus* begins with a swarm-catching expedition gone wrong, and Grandpa has to rescue Meredith from stinging honey bees. Why do you think the book begins with this scene? How are the themes it sets up explored later in the story?
2. A major thread in *The Honey Bus* is the notion of biological versus chosen family. What kind of role do Grandpa and the bees play in Meredith's life, and how do they shape the person she becomes? Is there someone in your own life who had a similar impact on you?
3. Meredith's mother rarely leaves the bedroom and her mood sways between fragile and frantic. Grandpa, by contrast, is a soft-spoken Big Sur mountain man who loves the outdoors. How do these different personalities affect the way Meredith sees the world? How do they dictate family dynamics?
4. One way Meredith clings to the memory of her father is by listening to The Beatles, even though the music makes her cry. Does this resonate with your sense of music and visceral memory? Do you have songs that transport you back in time or make you feel strong emotions?  
Reflecting on her childhood, Meredith writes:

*I gravitated toward bees because I sensed that the hive held ancient wisdom to teach me the things that my parents could not. It is from the honeybee, a species that has been surviving for the last 100 million years, that I learned how to persevere.*

What honeybee behavior does Meredith witness that informs her understanding of human nature and her own relationships? Has nature ever taught you something about yourself?

5. *The Honey Bus* title was taken from a hollowed-out ramshackle army bus in the backyard where Grandpa bottled honey. When Grandpa teaches Meredith how to harvest for the first time, she writes, "The honey glowed in my hands, like a living, breathing thing. It was warm, and I loved it because it made sense when nothing else did." Throughout the story Meredith and Grandpa keep retreating to the honey bus. What role does this space play in both of their lives?
6. When Meredith's brother Matthew is ten, he's given his own bedroom—in a camping trailer in the yard. Meredith envies his freedom, yet Matthew remembers shivering in the winters and feeling ostracized, sequestered outside until he eventually left for college. What do you make of this living arrangement, and how did it create different family experiences for the two siblings? If Matthew wrote a memoir, how do you imagine it would differ from his sister's?
7. In the epilogue, Meredith relocates Grandpa's last remaining beehive to San Francisco to start an apiary of her own in a community garden. A little boy visiting on a school trip tells her with pride that his grandfather keeps bees. Meredith tells him that he's "the luckiest boy in the world." What do you make of this final scene?

***Discussion questions issued by the publisher.***



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