

Reading Group Discussion Guide

For: *Growing Up In Mama's Club* by Richard E. Kelly

1. Why did Dickie refer to Mama's new religion as the Club? Discuss the role that people's need for belonging plays in recruiting members of any group.
2. What was Mama's state of mind when Mrs. Edwards first knocked on her door? Could you relate to Mama?
3. Has anyone ever come to your door with a religious message? What did you do?
4. What obstacles did Mama encounter with the Club before she became a baptized convert?
5. Discuss what characterized Mama's struggles after becoming a convert.
6. Describe some of the non-mainstream beliefs and practices of the Club. What seemed to make them plausible to Club members?
7. Why do members of the Club believe they are the only religious group that has "the truth"? Why couldn't Dickie believe it?
8. Describe the role that Dickie's grandparents played in helping him grow up. How important of a role do you think extended family members have in the creation of a child's self-esteem? Who, besides your parents, helped mentor you? Do you play this part in someone else's life?
9. What inner conflict did Dickie have once his mama joined the Club? How was he able to cope with a situation over which he had no control?
10. What made Dickie decide to finally leave the Club?
11. Describe some of the more unusual and interesting people you were introduced to in Mama's Club.
12. Do you believe that only unintelligent people are attracted to the Club? Why do you feel this way?
13. Why do you think people like Stuart Sanders, Lena Edwards, and Papa were attracted to the Club?
14. What were some of Dickie's positive experiences during his 16 years with the Club?
15. What did the Club believe about certain popular holidays? Why did they hold those beliefs? How did this affect Dickie and his family?
16. Did the Club believe in educating their children? Did Dickie's parents support advanced education for themselves and their children?
17. How would you imagine that the Club treated new converts holding advanced or professional degrees?
18. Why do you think Mama spent hundreds of hours in the door-to-door work every year? Was her motivation more to assure her survival at Armageddon or for those people she called on?
19. Dickie's parents chose not to take extra steps and state aid to help Susan, believing she would grow to perfection in the soon to come new world. Did that make them irresponsible or uncaring? Should they have had the legal right to make that decision?
20. What advice would you give parents after reading the book? What will you stop or start doing as a consequence of reading Dickie's story?