

**Discussion Topics for *How Not to Cry in Public & Other Victories*
by Jean Stringam**

- Have you ever had the problem of crying at inopportune moments? Have you tried Brenna's method for avoiding it? Was it a victory for you?
- Brenna longs for a relationship with her mother and finds many ways to fill this void in her life. Evaluate the outcomes.
- Brenna wonders for years why her mother sent her to live with her Uncle Douglas. Trace the evolution of her understanding as she learns more about her mother.
- How does Brenna's fifth-grade debacle help her connect with her Uncle's troubles? In what ways are the two events similar or different?
- Several characters express their views on the topic of self-esteem. Evaluate their reasoning and explain what you believe is the best view.
- In Brenna's search to locate and meet her relatives she makes mistakes and encounters success. Are there other ways she could have approached this project?
- Humiliation isn't something another person can do to you; humiliation is a consequence of something you've done. How would you sort out the value systems and relationships of Douglas, his twin brother Marc, and their father, William Walker, Sr., to find the source of Douglas's sense of humiliation?
- At various times Brenna hides from the world by sleeping for days. Using the above definition, is it humiliation she feels? Or would some other term for her emotional state be more accurate?
- What is Uncle Richard's view of life in a big family compared to Brenna's?
- Brenna makes her first discoveries about boys during this traumatic year, both as to friendship and romance. What does she learn in the process?
- As you discover the relationships in the Walker family, create a three-generation family tree.
- What do you know about your own family? Print off a genealogical chart from the Internet and complete as much as you can. Ask your oldest relatives to help you finish filling it in. What are the blank spots in your personal family search? You can begin your access to your family by going to www.familysearch.org and typing in the name of one of your ancestors. If you would like to participate in indexing family history records, click on the Indexing tab. You may find it connects you to people of an historical era in a wonderfully personal way.
- Jean Stringam writes songs for her characters. You can find Brenna's song, "Who Am I?" at the end of the novel, or you can download it at <http://www.sheetmusicplus.com/publishers/Jean-Stringam/1746>. You can also listen to a version on YouTube.