

Discussion Topics for *Regrets Tree on Fire*  
By Jean Stringam

- Loyalty is a quality that Bill recognizes he has, but he doesn't understand where it comes from or what its value might be. What do you think contributes to a person's sense of loyalty? Is it innate or can it be developed? How much of it is by choice?
- Each boy's relationship with his father is very different. What are the chasms that each has to bridge? If you had to choose one of the fathers to get along with as your own father, who would you choose? What would you do differently from Bill, Devon, or Howie in the relationship?
- Devon feels like he was ambushed by pornography much the same as Howie was ambushed by the hate mail on his cell phone. Neither of them went looking for it. How are their ways of dealing with the assault the same and how are they different?
- Bill, Devon, and Howie take different approaches toward the girls they like with varying degrees of success. What do you think worked for them, and what do you think they did that weakened the relationship?
- Bill has to learn how to navigate a variety of female relationships: his mother, grandmother, sisters, and girlfriend. How does his approach to the women in his life vary? Do you think he would have been better off making other responses?
- Bill comes to realize that what has destabilized their lives at school is something that could actually destroy the culture. What would you do to combat such a development if you were in his shoes?
- Bill, Devon, and Howie come from educated, affluent families. Some would see their backgrounds as privileged in several ways. Are their problems a result of their class position? Do people of every economic class have to face similar dilemmas? Are their problems uniquely North American or are they universal?
- Bill and Howie frequently discuss existential issues. Do their views coincide or differ from yours? How do you see your own position in the universe? Are you comfortable with it? Does it worry you? Do you think there are answers?