

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

- Bill faces a steep learning curve through the women in his life. In what ways do his mother, grandmother, sisters, cousin, and girlfriend challenge his sense of the way the world should be?
- The novel examines whether it is possible for boys to keep their integrity when 21st century culture is drenched with sex and violence. To what extent do you feel that Bill, Devon, and Howie succeed?
- The boys experience specific relationship patterns with their fathers, which they handle in very different ways. What are the advantages and disadvantages to the approaches the boys take? What about the fathers – could they change?
- Bill's sense of loyalty determines many of his choices. Where does this loyalty come from? How would his life be different if he didn't feel loyal to various difficult people in his life? Would he be happier without loyalty as part of his core?
- All three boys take different approaches to their girlfriends. Evaluate their success in creating a happy relationship with the girl.
- Examine how the boys' lives are shaped by their socio-economic class. For example, would their problems be any more acute if they were from working class families? Do they have it easier than boys from poorer circumstances?
- The boys are terrified to discover an element that could undermine civil rights in such a way as to destroy the freedom of western society. What are their choices for the future? Ignore it? Combat it? If so, how?

For those who like research:

- What laws support civil rights in your country? When a specific conflict erupts, what aspects of those rights tend to erode first?
- Can you apply the laws of your country to protect Howie from the danger he faces?