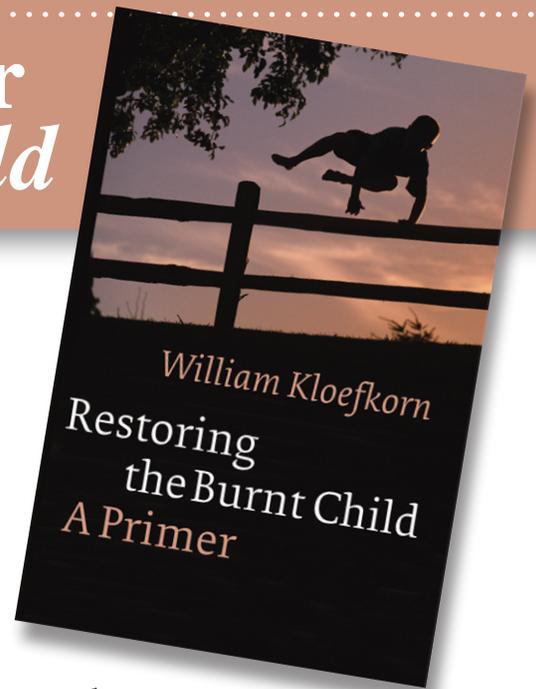


Discussion Questions for *Restoring the Burnt Child*



1. What do you think is the significance of the title?
2. Typically, one's "coming of age" takes place during a singular moment or event that he or she recalls as being significant. In *Restoring the Burnt Child* William Kloefkorn relates several moments between the ages of nine and thirteen that could be described as leading to a coming of age. Pick one of these moments and discuss its significance both for Kloefkorn and the memoir as a whole.
3. World War II is the background of Kloefkorn's life during this time, and war plays an underlying role in many of his adventures. How do you think the backdrop of war affects his coming of age? How is a story like this relevant today, with the Iraq War as a backdrop to our lives?
4. Kloefkorn is also a poet. Where and how do you see poetry influencing his writing?
5. Kloefkorn likes to play with language and the sound of words. Sometimes the reader can almost hear the melody of the words as he breaks them down, such as "ric-o-chet" and "fe-cun-di-ty." What effect does this have on the way Kloefkorn tells his story? Why is it important for us to hear this story as well as read it?
6. Near the end of the memoir, Kloefkorn says, "Chronology has at best a habit of collapsing, of becoming quickly smaller, like the leaky bellows of the old red-and-black accordion as my grandfather squeezed it--or at worst not frankly giving a damn." We get the sense that Kloefkorn is describing not just his life but life in general. How does chronology "collapse" in the narrative? What effect does this have on the way we understand his story? What effect does chronology have on the way we view our own lives?
7. We get to see Kloefkorn not only as a child but also, at various places in the narrative, as a middle-aged man. Do these glimpses into later life help us understand the child? How so?
8. Fire plays a prominent role in the narrative, both literally and figuratively, from the family home catching fire to the fire-and-brimstone of hell preached during the tent revival. Describe how fire is both destructive and restorative (or purifying) in the memoir.
9. Choose one of the people Kloefkorn describes in detail and discuss the influence this person has on Kloefkorn as a child and the narrative itself.

Discussion Questions continued.

10. Kloefkorn describes Sister Hook and the Women's Christian Temperance Union Ladies in stark detail and spends a lot of time discussing them throughout the narrative. However, absent from the memoir are such detailed portraits of his own mother and sister. Is it significant that the Women's Christian Temperance Union Ladies are described in detail and at length, and Kloefkorn's mother and sister are not? Does it indicate a lack of influence in Kloefkorn's life by the latter? Or can we gather as much information about the author's mother and sister in the type of detail he gives about them rather than the amount? Do we need to reconcile these questions? Why or why not?

11. How is death dealt with in the narrative?

12. Explain the significance of the barn swallow and/or the rabbit hunting incidents.

13. Explain the significance of the Turtle Rock and/or the home-made cave.

14. Is the burnt child restored? Why or why not?