

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

for Mary Agria's

VOX HUMANA: The Human Voice

1. In one way or another each of the main characters—Char, Rob, Marty, Leah, Grace, and Rob—are "broken" people. With which of them can you most identify and what is in their particular "story" that intrigues you?
2. Secondary characters like Rob and Char's children, Todd Rutterbach, Wilma and Father Wills all make unique contributions to the novel. Single out the one that resonated most with you and how that character impacted others in the story.
3. What are the strengths in Char Howard's character? What weakness(es) helped fuel the crisis in which she finds herself? How does she learn to transcend her past?
4. What is Rob Sims' greatest strength? What character traits keep him from moving beyond his past failures? What event(s) prove key in changing that?
5. Why did early retirement hit Char so hard? How did her view of work contribute to limiting her growth and undermine her sense of self-worth? What events most help her see what it truly means to find her vocation or calling?
6. What factors caused Rob to make the personal and professional choices that proved so disastrous for him? Discuss key events that helped him begin to change?
7. What role do the generations play in the novel? How is "family" defined in a place like Hope? Point to a single incident in the novel that for you reflects the best or the best in family/community life?
8. What would you describe as the strongest positive aspect of life in a rural community like Hope? The most negative one?
9. Music in VOX is both solitary and communal. Discuss the connections Char feels between her art and her spirituality. How does that impact others? eg. Wilma, Rob.
10. How does a visual art like weaving enrich the lives of people in the novel? Discuss "Undercroft Arts" in the context of rebuilding economically struggling communities.
11. What role does the institutional church play in the unfolding novel? How do characters like Wills, the Bishop, the retreat house director Father Gillespie or the members of the congregation at Nativity contribute to the novel?
12. What single episode in the novel had the greatest impact for you and why? What single episode was the most surprising or disturbing?