Inside by Alix Ohlin

1. *Inside* is told from the perspectives of three people: Grace, Mitch, and Anne, over ten years. What did you think of the structure of the novel and the characters the author chose to highlight?

2. What motivated Grace, Mitch, and Anne to help the people they did?

3. Alix Ohlin says that with *Inside* she wanted to explore what it means to successfully help another person, and the idea that it might still be important to try and support others, even if there are obvious risks of failure. Which characters succeed in helping someone? Who fails? How does each character who doesn't succeed cope with their failure?

4. Why does Anne help Hilary, and what does she gain from doing so? Later in the novel, when Hilary contacts Anne for her help again, Anne refuses, but then changes her mind and sends her all of her savings. Why do you think she does that?

5. Grace, Anne, and Hilary all got pregnant as teens. How else are Anne and Grace similar? How are Hilary and Anne similar? How do these similarities affect their relationships with one another?

6. Both Mitch and Grace are therapists. How do their professional approaches differ? How are their sessions affected by their personal relationships? What do they both struggle with when dealing with their patients?

7. When Tug reveals to Grace a small part of his story, Grace thinks, "There is a difference between the facts of a person and the truth of him." Truth and honesty, and lack thereof, comprise a major theme in this novel. How does dishonesty or withholding the truth affect the characters' relationships and actions?

8. What happens between Tug and Grace when Tug finally tells his Rwandan story? How does the truth impact both of them?

9. The author writes, "My main theme as a writer [is] the necessity and difficulty of the connections between people, how they sometimes break, how they can be sustained." How is this explored in *Inside*?

10. How do you think the title of this novel relates to the book overall? What do you think the book's cover image signifies?