



## BOOK GROUP QUESTIONS

From the author's website,  
<http://www.monicawood.com/omb.html>

1. In the opening pages, we discover that the boy of the title has died. And yet, he is a catalyst for everything that happens afterward. How did you perceive the boy's role in the story--as an absence? A presence? A sort of invisible stage manager? Did you sometimes forget that he was no longer alive?
2. For the first time in her life, Ona gives away her secrets—to a child. What is it about the boy that Ona instinctively trusts?
3. Ona observes, "People like Quinn, always running from themselves, loved the road." What does she mean by this? Is Quinn the only character "on the run" here?
4. "You reveal a character in two ways," the author has said. "One, how the character views the world. Two, how the world views the character." Does this insight apply to the characters here? Quinn, for example, is rightly regretful for his fatherly failings, and yet the boys in Resurrection Lane trust and rely on him completely. How do varying perceptions combine to make fictional characters feel real?
5. Discuss the various friendships in the book: Ona and the boy; Ona and Quinn; Quinn and Belle; Ona and Louise. What about Quinn's friendship with his bandmates in The Benders? Or with Sylvie? To what degree are all these friendships necessary to the people involved?
6. "I have deficiencies," the boy tells Ona. Does he? The author has said that she created the boy before the word "autism" or "Asperger's" entered the American lexicon. "He's just who he is," Belle says, bristling against labels. Is Belle right? Does it matter?
7. When Belle says, "I figured you must have worked," Ona is thrilled to have been recognized "as the employable type." Why is her career as a "professional secretary" such a badge of honor for Ona?
8. The author has said, "In my novels I assemble families from broken parts." Is that true in this novel? Is friendship sometimes more powerful than family ties?
9. Quinn is "uneasy around the boy, troubled by the world in which he dwelled." Why do you think that is the case?
10. The author has said, "If a writer can't make you like a character, she must at least make you understand him." Despite Quinn's flaws, do you like him? If not, did you understand why he behaves the way he does?

11. When Ona explains the Guinness World Records to Belle and Quinn, she observes: "How tranquilizing it was to arm yourself with information, how consoling to unpack the facts and then plant them like fence pickets, building a sturdy pen in which you stood alone, cosseted against human fallibility." Is this why the boy made lists? Is there a calming aspect to list-making that appeals to a certain type of person?

12. Throughout the book Quinn makes several references to his mother, who died young. How does this early loss contribute to Quinn's growing affection for Ona?

13. At 104, Ona is young compared to the world's oldest citizens. This is a surprise to both her and the boy. Was it a surprise to you? Did meeting Ona change your assumptions about extreme old age?

14. Before meeting the boy, "Ona had believed herself through with friendship." How does old age change Ona's ideas about friendship? Did reading the novel cause you to examine your own friendships?

15. Quinn refers to Belle, with whom he has a fraught relationship, as his "truest friend." What does he mean by this? Can we be friends with those whom we have hurt? Do you find echoes of Quinn and Belle in the friendship between Ona and Louise?

16. The novel contains a large cast of major and minor characters. Who makes the most significant journey? Is there more than one way to identify "the main character"? To whom does this story ultimately belong?

17. The boys in Resurrection Lane have an unshakeable faith in the Lord. What kind of faith grounds the other characters?

18. Ona tells Quinn that the boy turned her from a "striver" to a "dreamer." Who are the strivers in this book? Who are the dreamers? Can you divide your own friends and family members in the same way?

19. After Ona tells the boy about seeing a thousand hummingbirds on a roadside, she adds: "This is the sort of thing Louise invited into my life." Was Louise a friend or an opportunist? What do you think was the nature of Ona's love for Louise?

20. *The One-in-a-Million Boy* has sold in over a dozen countries, from Brazil to South Korea. What, if anything, about this American story strikes you as transcending culture?

**One more, just for fun: The Guinness World Records plays a role in the book. If you were to set a record, what would it be?**