

Discussion Guide

Questions for reading *The Light in the Window* with care

Why this exists

This guide helps readers explore the story without turning lived experience into spectacle or forcing personal disclosure.

Who it is for

Individual readers and facilitated groups seeking thoughtful conversation about family, foster care, grief, welcome, and responsibility.

Your meaningful next step

Choose one section below. Answer one question honestly before trying to answer them all.

How to use this guide

Move slowly. The best discussion may come from one good question and a long pause. Readers may have personal experience with foster care, adoption, family separation, grief, faith, incarceration, or trauma. Participation should always be voluntary.

Do not ask anyone to represent all foster youth, foster parents, adoptees, biological parents, or families. A person owns their own story—not an entire system.

For facilitators

- Name the purpose of the gathering.
- Remind people that passing is always acceptable.
- Interrupt stereotypes without shaming the speaker.
- Separate facts about systems from judgments about individual families.
- End with an invitation, not an obligation.

Questions about welcome and belonging

- When does a building begin to feel like a home?
- Which repeated actions build trust more effectively than promises?
- How can welcome preserve dignity instead of creating indebtedness?
- What does it mean to be expected?
- Where does the story show that belonging can be complicated?

A line, scene, or idea I want to remember:

One question I would ask the author:

Questions about family, grief, and memory

- How does loss change the way people make room for others?
- What are the risks of telling a family story too neatly?
- How can a writer honor people who cannot revise the account themselves?
- Which memories carry both gratitude and pain?
- What does the story suggest about legal family and lived family?

A gracious discussion makes room for complexity. Gratitude does not erase pain, and pain does not erase gratitude.

Something I understand differently now:

Questions about action

- Which act in the story was ordinary but consequential?
- What can someone do without becoming a foster parent?
- Which trusted organization or public resource should you learn from next?
- What form of service fits your time, talent, knowledge, influence, or story?
- How can you act without making yourself the hero?

My one meaningful next step:

When I will take it:
