

**THE FIFTH REFLECTION**  
READER'S GUIDE

1. THE FIFTH REFLECTION deals with a very difficult subject: pedophilia. What did you learn about pedophilia and pedophiles from this book? What, if anything, surprised you?
2. Given the nature of pedophilia, what do you think can and should be done about the pedophiles in our midst? What about those who haven't acted on these tendencies?
3. In THE FIFTH REFLECTION we are introduced to the artist JJ and her controversial photographs of children. Dot reflects: "The photos are gorgeous, evocative, drawing me in and repelling me at the same moment." What is the difference, to you, between sensual and sexual?
4. Can photos of naked children ever be non-exploitive?
5. Frank and Dot have very different opinions on JJ's work. Dot believes that her photographs sexualize children. Frank on the other hand thinks that Dot is pathologizing art. Who do you think is right?
6. Many of the issues raised in THE FIFTH REFLECTION have echoes in controversies of recent years involving artists and their personal conduct. Do you think that great art can be considered separate from its creator?
7. In THE FIFTH REFLECTION, Officer Manny Ochoa is put in charge of an "Internet Crimes Against Children task force." His working conditions are poor, and he struggles with the stress of the job. What does all of this say to you about the purpose of the task force and about the priorities of Chief Pence and the larger community in which this is taking place?
8. Given the extraordinary difficulties and stress involved with working on child exploitation and pornography, how could the Kenilworth PD do a better job supporting the officers who are assigned to this duty?
9. Dot and Eddie, a police officer on medical leave, have somewhat different points of view on the same phenomena, that of officers not wanting to share their experiences with outsiders and sometimes not even with fellow cops. Eddie says that "Nobody wants to hear what we do for a living. Half the time they don't believe the stuff we see." From Dot's perspective, "cops...protect other people from the things they see, and in the process, protect themselves from revisiting unpleasant memories." How do you think this affects officers' psychological health and relationships? What should the role of an officer's intimate partner be in this situation?

10. At one point, Dot tells us that “It would never do to show tenderness in front of other cops. Tenderness equals weakness and weakness is the fastest way to get yourself ostracized. No one wants to work with a weak officer. Weak officers are undependable.” What do you think about this aspect of police culture? Does tenderness really equal weakness? How would this belief tend to affect police marriages and families? Do you think it’s possible for an officer to remain tender in the face of what they encounter on the job? Is there any way for police culture to become more supportive of officers’ emotional needs?
  
11. JJ deals with the loss of her daughter in part by relying on her Buddhist teachings, and in fact, the novel takes its title from the Buddha’s Fifth Reflection: “I am the owner of my actions, heir of my actions. Whatever actions I do, good or evil, of these I shall become the heir.” What does this title choice tell you about the themes of the novel? What do you think about JJ’s philosophy of forgiveness, her belief that if she wants a life of grace and joy, she must become grace and joy, especially in light of the ending and the revelation of the killer?