

# Crossing into the Mystic

By D. L. Koontz

## Reading Group Questions and Topics for Discussion

1. Grace's life was changed dramatically at age 13 when she lost her mother, step-father, sister, home, security. This—followed by three years with an aunt who showed her little love and even less attention—made her grow up quickly. Have you or someone you know ever had to “grow up quickly,” long “before their time?” How do you think it shaped you/them? How do your/their mannerisms, maturity and reactions differ from others?
2. Grace believed she had two choices: (1) to stay in *Crossings* and deal with the ghost (Will) who saved her from intruders, or (2) move back to Boston to live with her volatile aunt. How much of her decision was based on her desire to stay away from her aunt and how much was driven by the hope that she'd see her dead family, just as she saw Will? What would you have done?
3. In this book, Grace crossed into the mystic – a term representing an unknown world that is not controlled by logic, proof and science. Would you have taken the risks and chances she took? What would you have done differently than Grace, if you were in her shoes?
4. *Crossing into the Mystic* is a blending of issues involving life and death, good and evil, happiness and suffering, trust and disbelief, fulfillment and desperation. What do you think Grace learns most during her journey in book 1? In what ways do you project (or hope) she might grow throughout the series (three books in total)?
5. What preconceptions and assumptions are challenged throughout this story? For example, Grace's world belief changed when she learned to communicate with a ghost. Do you think people become so anchored in their own version of “reality” that they cannot accept or even “see” things that lie outside of it?
6. Do you have hesitations or problems with the possibility of life after death? With angels/demons in our midst? With the notion that ghosts might stay on earth due to unfinished business or an unwillingness to step into the hereafter? Or, do you believe that once you're dead, you're dead? Or, perhaps you believe something altogether different?
7. In this book, Will fought for the South during the Civil War where slavery was still practiced at the time, yet he said no one should live in bondage. What do you think was behind his allegiance to the South? Do you see him as a hero who stood by friends and family, or do you think—as his dead estranged wife Naomi accused—that he was a fool fighting for a lost cause?
8. When Grace is afraid, she repeats quotes on fear, to herself. What do you do when you are afraid? How does that help to calm you?

9. Some readers have said that what makes *Crossing into the Mystic* especially interesting is the way it makes you think about God and the afterlife without preaching and judging. Has it done the same for you? What parts of this book resonated with you?
10. How would you describe this novel to a friend? Is it a suspense novel? A thriller? A love story? A historical yarn? A study in character motivation and growth? What makes *Crossing into the Mystic* stand out among contemporary novels? Or, if you don't think it does, what could the author have done differently to make it do so?
11. Friendship blooms between Adriana, Cassie and Grace, yet they are of different ages, backgrounds, experiences. How are they good for one another? How do their friendships evolve during this story? What do you like about their friendships?
12. When it comes to spookiness and things that go bump in the night, we seem to be torn, not able to decide whether to scoff at such experiences or to seek them out. Do you think we are drawn to ghost stories because we intuitively sense there may be more to reality than our eyes normally perceive?
13. Nearly one in four Americans claims to have encountered an apparition. Yet, we've been conditioned by the scientific worldview to ignore spiritual implications and blame our overactive imagination for making things up. Do you think everything can be explained scientifically, or do you give credence to miracles and things unseen? Have you ever encountered something unexplainable? And, if so, how has it changed your thinking?
14. Why did you like or dislike *Crossing into the Mystic*? If you found yourself thinking about it afterward, what was at the center of your thoughts?
15. Where do you hope the author takes the characters in books 2 and 3? What would have to be present in the sequels for you to consider your time in reading them not just *well-spent*, but *well-invested* as well?

### **Bonus: Questions for Christian Readers**

16. The Bible teaches that angels are not equal to God, but exist to carry out his missions and accomplish His will. The Bible also suggests that demons are real, describes them as cunning and beguiling, and contains so many references to demons, demon possession, unclean spirits, exorcisms, and the casting out of evil spirits that we must consider that the universe is more complex than it may appear to our senses, and certainly to science. Do you agree? Why or why not?
17. Have you ever experienced a ghost or apparition, or other such unexplained phenomenon? How have you reconciled that with your faith? Has it boosted your faith even more? Do you think ghosts may be angels and demons in disguise?
18. In Old Testament times, things were different. Men knew what an angel crossing their path looked like. They would fall down on their face in terror. It didn't matter whether that angel was fallen or not. But nowadays, nobody seems to notice anything anymore. The supernatural and the spiritual blend in with

the superficial. Nothing seems real. Nothing means anything. People are indifferent. Too busy. Do you agree or disagree? How do you take time to notice what's around you and what God wants you to do?

19. The book of Isaiah tells us not to seek counsel from dead people, witches, fortunetellers, etc. However, Grace talks with several dead people, and it's not until the end of the trilogy (avoiding a spoiler) that Grace learns the error of her ways, and where she should and shouldn't place her trust. This means that Grace may be doing things the "wrong" way. Do you think it's okay for authors to show the wrong way, in order to show character growth and change? Or, must characters be close-to-perfect, (with only minor flaws), in order to present a credible Christian character?
20. Where do you think Grace's journey will take her? Do you believe that a love grown at such a delicate age with obstacles as substantial as family, faith, and foes can withstand the test of time?