

# Edging through the Darkness

*Book II in The Crossings Trilogy*

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## Reading Group Questions and Topics for Discussion

1. *Edging through the Darkness (EttD)* picks up where *Crossing into the Mystic* left off. The series is identified as a trilogy, each book building on the other. Yet, *EttD* has received comment (*albeit, slight*) that the second book could not stand alone. Was that a problem for you? Would it have been a problem if there had been no delay and could have read both books back-to-back? Do you think it important that each book be able to stand alone? How do you feel about series?
2. A novelist researches a number of disparate topics to complete a book. In this series, for example, the author researched: social life during the Civil War; details of battles; origins and maneuvers of particular regiments (when they formed, where they fought, where they were imprisoned); ghosts (what the different Bible translations say vs. what the secular population believes); phrases, expressions and general language used in 1860s; and current-day colloquialisms used in the various locations referenced in the book (from Boston to West Virginia, to the Deep South); and more!

Once done, much of the research was edited out by editorial staff to expedite the reading process. Do you agree with the amount of historical detail shared in *EttD*? Would you have liked more or fewer details? Why?

3. Time travel is the concept of movement (usually by a human) between different points in time. Many think Audrey Niffenegger's "The Time Traveler's Wife" (2009) was the most well-known to employ this technique, but actually H.G. Wells and Mark Twain popularly used the technique, too, as did Washington Irving ("Rip Van Winkle" - 1819).

Time travel allows the reader to examine how things change and how they stay the same. The problem is, you—as reader—are asked to believe someone would leave his/her present existence for another era...and love it. But, for example, would a modern-day woman truly (and willingly) stay in always-dangerous Medieval England (leaving behind friends and family) for a hunk with whom she would have *very* little in common?

*EttD* is a time travel novel with a twist. Rather than take Grace back and forth in time, the author chose to bring the past forward by way of ghosts. Did you enjoy this approach? If yes, why? If not, why not? (Do note that both time travel and

ghosts are considered paranormal stories as both are equally unlikely, if not impossible.)

4. *EttD* further develops Grace's story to where, at the end of the book, she begins to believe Will has been lying about who and what he is. How did that make you feel? Were you disappointed, or did you think this was only a natural outcome for a spirit who has eschewed death?
5. Aryeh Calfcort (the ghost helping to write a song in the library) and Malcolm Prestwood (the ghost researcher at the Georgia Historical Society) both suggest they are assisting a living being to further along something that already exists. Aryeh says, "It's not my song. In fact, the song is already written," and Malcolm says, "It's not my cure. But the cure does exist."

Do you think that souls / angels / demons interact with us, helping us along (angels) OR thwarting our efforts (demons)? Do you think songs, books, art and medical cures already exist and are divinely given? Ecclesiastes 1:9 says, "...there is nothing new under the sun." Do you believe this applies to creative arts and medical break-throughs?

6. Grace puts the sleuthing of Mason's death on hold, and by doing so, places Clay on hold too, in order to help her cousin. Would you have taken the chances that Grace took to save a family member? What might you have done differently?
7. Publishing has changed drastically in the past ten years. As self-publishing and technology have blossomed, readership has dwindled and yet there are more books than ever published—about 3 million in the U.S. last year! As such, editors push for less description and detail to speed up the reading process, with the option of fully detailed books coming mostly from established authors. Would you have liked more lavish description in *EttD*, like that employed in Diane Gabaldon's "Outlander" (1992), for example? Why or why not?
8. The character of Seth Rendale undergoes a total transformation from book one to book two, after a demonic presence invades his body and he almost dies. Do you think people can change their personalities dramatically, such as after horrific (or wonderful!) events: overcoming disease, becoming a parent, experiencing near-death moments, embracing a faith. Has it ever happened to you? Or, do you know someone who has changed dramatically after a life event?
9. Many readers said they were rooting for Grace to choose Clay at the end of the series. However, in *EttD* Seth has changed into a very mature and patient young man. Do you like this new person he becomes even more than Clay who tends to be a stronger and more-demanding personality? Why/why not?
10. The locales described in *EttD* (West Virginia, Maryland) were the center of constant struggle, fear and change during the Civil War. In fact, Winchester, VA—which is only 30 minutes from Grace's W.V. estate—changed sides 76 times

during the four-year conflict! And, in Maryland, residents were known for three opinions—pro-North, pro-South or neutral. How might these waffling—and often combative attitudes—have affected daily life in the 1860s for civilians? Do you think it was a constant struggle to know whom you could trust? Or, from whom you could purchase goods and services? How do you think four years of war in your back yard would affect and/or change you?

11. *Crossing into the Mystic* (book one) has won a first-place Chanticleer Book Award and has captured the attention of a screenwriter who has written a screenplay of it. And, at least two directors have voiced interest in directing it for a movie. (However, this is all highly speculative and subject to securing interests from a small, independent production company, as well as the need to secure financing.) Do you think *EttD* also offers an intriguing plot and graphics that would make a good movie? Why or why not?
12. What details do you most hope are resolved in book three? Do you root for Grace to choose Seth or Clay (and life), or Will (and death), or someone new? Do you think Grace is fighting sinister foes of the living or dead kind....or both?