



## Book Club and Reader's Guide Discussion Questions

### *When Dreams Touch*

By Rosemary Hanrahan (Edwards)

1. Of the three main POV characters, Adelaide, Kate and Giselle, Adelaide has a disproportionately shorter voice in the story. How does her voice and story continue in the novel?
2. The term “Missionary” is used in several contexts throughout the book, and at times with a less than positive connotation. What emotions and impressions does the term missionary bring to your mind?
3. When Adelaide is pregnant, she says she could never leave her child. Yet she leaves Tieina in Port au Prince when she goes home to die. What choice would you make if you were in Adelaide’s situation?
4. Giselle states early in the novel that she doesn’t understand her parents’ passion to join the *bat teneb*—beat back the darkness—of oppression in Haiti. How and when does this change?
5. When Kate moves away from home during her college years, her father cautions her, “The secret to success in medicine and in life is not to get used up.” Do you agree with this statement? Did Kate heed his advice throughout her career and life?
6. When Kate returns to the U.S. after being stranded in Haiti following the 1991 coup d’etat and the rabid dog bite, she states that it wasn’t her life that changed, it was her. Can you relate to Kate’s sense of culture shock coming to and going from Haiti?
7. When her AIDS patient, Michael Rose is dying, Kate acknowledges to herself that she knows little about religion, God or faith. Does Kate see herself as a spiritual person. Does this change? How and when?
8. What are some of the similarities and contrasts between HIV/AIDS in the U.S. in the early 1980’s in the U.S. and 20 years later in Haiti?
9. Solidarity is a key theme among the Haitian women portrayed. What does solidarity mean and how did it impact on the main characters realizing their dreams?
10. How does Kate handle the conflict she feels as a doctor treating AIDS patients and a wife/mother/mother to be?

11. When stranded in Haiti, Kate acknowledges to herself that she is ashamed because she can't feel joy for or with the Haitians. How and why does this change for her?
12. What are some of the impressions and misconceptions you experienced about International assistance programs as you read the story?
13. What are some of the impressions and misconceptions you and impressions you experienced about Vodou as you read the story?
14. How do you think being stranded in Haiti after the 1991 coup d'etat influenced Kate's future commitment to Haiti?
15. How would you respond to this statement? "There are so many people in our own country who need help. We should help them before we worry about people in other countries." Is your response different than it would have been before you read *When Dreams Touch*?
16. Throughout the book, the plea, "Don't forget us" is expressed. Given all the poverty and challenges in Haiti, does this seem like an odd request?
17. How do Giselle and Yvonne challenge Kate to navigate her (at times) conflicting role as physician, mother and director of a nonprofit organization to do more--for example with the contraception issue?
18. When Natali is discouraged because money is missing from the microcredit program she oversees, Giselle cautions her daughter, "Remember why you are doing this. When there is great poverty and money available, there will always be jealousy and corruption." Do you agree with this statement?
19. If you knew of someone traveling to a third-world (developing) country, what advice would you offer after reading this book?
20. How successful were the three women portrayed, Kate, Aelaide and Giselle, in realizing their dreams?
21. Did 9/11 impact on the characters and the realization of their dreams?
22. Hope is a central theme throughout the story although at times, it seems misplaced. How does hope inform lives in Haiti?
23. Why do you think the author told the end of the story in Tieina's voice?
24. What do you think Tieina, Jen and Natalie will be doing in 2020? In 2030?

*To learn more about how Health, Education and Community Development Programs are making a positive and lasting difference in Haiti, please visit these websites:*

University of Fondwa in Haiti (<http://www.ufondwa.org>)

Diocese of Norwich Outreach to Haiti (<http://www.outreachtohaiti.org>)

Partners in Progress (<http://www.piphaiti.org>).