

Reader's Guide for *31 Hours* *a novel by Masha Hamilton*

Questions for Discussion:

1. Carol struggles with how involved she can get as a mother when she's worried about her young adult son. How *does* parenting change as children become young adults? Do you think she does too much, too little, or enough?
2. What factors contribute to Jonas finding himself in the circumstances that he does as the novel begins? Is it possible to feel sympathetic toward him?
3. The New York City subway is a force in the novel. How do different characters perceive the subway?
4. The diverse meaning of prayer is one of the novel's themes. Sonny Hurt, the subway panhandler, views the subway as a holy place, a kind of church. And both Jonas and Mara try to pray in unusual ways. What role does prayer play in tying together Jonas and the other characters?
5. Jonas and Masoud both have somewhat distant relationships with their fathers. How might this have impacted their character development and the story's outcome?
6. What would have happened if Jonas had been able to reach Vic by cell phone sometime during those 31 hours?
7. What do you think will happen to the relationship between Carol and Jake after the novel ends?
8. In the final chapter, Jonas leaves the nails behind. What is the significance of that act?