

Sealed with a Kiss

an american love story in letters

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QUESTIONS FOR BOOK GROUP DISCUSSION

- ▶ The author of *Sealed with a Kiss* could refer to an actual collection of over 400 letters as he wrote his story. Do you believe that “evidence” is necessary to write a good memoir? Might there ever be a situation in which the *lack* of hard evidence was good for a memoir writer?
- ▶ Even after they had declared their love for each other, Bob and Fran were able to write to each other about the people each dated. How did the freedom to do so affect their growing relationship? Do you think such candor would be possible today given modern dating mores and norms?
- ▶ During the entire eight years of their correspondence, Bob and Fran never lived in the same city or even the same state. How do you feel the geographical distance between them shaped their growing relationship? What advantages, if any, do you feel its limitations provided them?
- ▶ Many novels and films dramatize the act of falling in love as an instantaneous and extreme experience, emphasizing its overwhelming power, its reliance on physical chemistry, its lack of conscious choice, and even its similarity to madness. *Sealed with a Kiss* depicts a very different kind of experience. How would you characterize its vision of falling in love? What benefits did this more gradual process offer? What disadvantages?
- ▶ In *Sealed with a Kiss*, the author relates that one of his friends is forced to marry a girl he believes he has gotten pregnant. The friend is not named or otherwise identified—but had he been, his privacy might be said to be violated. What obligations does a memoir writer have when depicting potentially sensitive events—first, to the person involved? To the sensibility or comfort of readers? To him- or herself and the authenticity of his or her own story? To the factual truth?
- ▶ As is the case with *Sealed with a Kiss*, modern memoir often relates the experience of “ordinary” people rather than famous ones. What do you feel is the value of reading life stories of this type? Is there something they teach us that celebrity memoirs, for example, cannot?
- ▶ What kind of written souvenirs of your own life have you saved, if any? Why did you preserve them? Do you plan to pass them on to future generations? What do you think their value might be to those readers? Have there been letters or other documents that you have destroyed or discarded? Why?
- ▶ Have you ever written, or thought of writing, any of your own life stories? What might be the benefits of doing so? The challenges?