



More Than Words Can Say

By Robert Barclay
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Introduction

From the author of *If Wishes Were Horses* comes a novel of long-buried secrets and self-discovery, showing us that sometimes what goes unsaid is more powerful than words. . . .

Chelsea Enright never expected to inherit her grandmother's lakeside cottage deep in the Adirondacks—a serene getaway that had been mysteriously closed up decades ago. This is no simple bequest, however, because when Chelsea finds her grandmother's WWII diaries, she's stunned to discover that they hold secrets she never suspected . . . and they have the power to turn her own life upside down.

Even more surprising is the compelling presence of local doctor Brandon "Yale, and Chelsea soon finds her "short stay" has stretched into the entire summer. She cannot put this cottage and her family's past behind her easily—and the more she learns about the woman her grandmother truly was, the more Chelsea's own life begins to change . . . and nothing will ever be the same again.

Questions for Discussion

1. In *More Than Words Can Say*, Chelsea Enright inherits several unexpected items from her late grandmother Brooke and they have a profound effect on her. Have you ever inherited something that was so unexpected or potentially life changing? If so, what sort of effect did that experience have on you?
2. Before going to Lake Evergreen, Chelsea is very doubtful that she will like it there or that she will want to keep the old cottage that she has inherited. However, over the course of time she discovers that she not only loves the lake and the cottage, she is also hungering for a simpler life, and she ends up staying for good. Have you ever wished for a simpler existence in a more rural environment? Conversely, if you live in a rural area, have you ever wished that your life could be more cosmopolitan? Is the grass really greener on the other side of the fence?
3. When Chelsea meets Brandon Yale, she comes to believe that he is a wonderful man, but she also guesses that he has a very troubled past. Only after his violent confrontation with Pug Jennings does Brandon finally open up to Chelsea and tell her his story. Have you ever had a friend or loved one confess a dark secret to you? If so, how did it affect your relationship? Was it for better or for worse?
4. Although Chelsea's lakeside cottage is lovely, it is also quite spartan. The mail is delivered by boat, and the nearest town is some twelve miles away. Additionally, the cottage has no television at all, nor does Chelsea buy one. Would you enjoy spending an entire summer in such a place? Given all the modern conveniences to which we have become accustomed, would that sense of isolation bore you to tears, or would you find it a welcome relief?
5. After the sudden death of her grandmother, Chelsea decides to go to Lake Evergreen, rather than stay in Syracuse and comfort her distraught mother, as Lucy asks her to do. Which do you think you would have done? Would you have stayed with Lucy and watched over her during her time of grief? Or would you have obeyed the wishes of your late grandmother and gone to Lake Evergreen to unravel the mysteries described in Brooke's letter?
6. Rather than tell Brooke's story to Lucy, Chelsea tosses all of Brooke's mementos into the fire and watches them burn, keeping them a secret forever. Do you believe that this is what you would have done? On the other hand, would your desire to know have been so great, and your need to inform Lucy been so strong, that you would have shown and told Lucy everything? Like Chelsea, have you ever kept a secret to yourself in order to spare the feelings of a loved one?
7. At the beginning of the book, Chelsea is far from being the outdoors type. But as the book progresses, and she and Brandon become closer, she finds herself doing things that she would never have imagined otherwise. She flies in Brandon's plane, learns to drive Brooke's old speedboat, and hikes all the way to the top of Red Rock Mountain. Have you ever tried new things for the sake of someone you love? If so, did doing these things bring the two of you closer?
8. Near the end of the book, we learn that although Brandon and Pug Jennings have had a very difficult past, it is Brandon's idea to hire Pug's unemployed wife to work with Chelsea at the Blue Rooster. Have you ever performed an unrequited act of kindness for someone with whom your relationship was deeply troubled? If you have, what sort of effect did it have on the two of you?
9. Although she always believed that she had been happy as an art teacher, Chelsea decides to change direction totally, and she buys the Blue Rooster. Are you happy in your current line of work? Or do you perhaps long to do something different but are unsure about what that might be? Do you believe that you would have the courage and determination to drop everything and start a new life, as Chelsea did?
10. Chelsea also inherits her grandmother's handwritten recipe book. It is filled with original recipes, many of which are named after Allied World War II leaders and famous American movie stars of the 1940s. Have you ever devised an original recipe of your own? If so, did you give it its own name? Have you tried re-creating any of Brooke's recipes found in the back of the book? How were the results?

11. By the end of the book, Emily Rousseau has become not only a good friend to Chelsea but also an important mentor. Sadly, our elderly are oftentimes dismissed as useless rather than being respected for their knowledge. Has an elderly person ever taken the time and care to teach you something of value, something that perhaps only he or she could? Was it a valuable experience? Do you still treasure those memories and the time spent with whoever taught you?

12. Part of Brooke Bartlett's torment stems from the fact that her husband, Bill, is away, training for his future involvement in World War II. Do you have a friend or relative serving in the armed forces who is away at this moment, perhaps even serving in a highly dangerous combat position? If that is the case, as you read the book, did it serve to bring you closer to the character of Brooke Bartlett?

13. As the book progresses, the reader learns about some of the hardships endured during civilian life during World War II, such as the shortages of food, gasoline, alcohol, etc. Do you believe that we present-day Americans take our relative prosperity and ease of acquiring consumer goods too much for granted?

14. Shortly after their wedding, Chelsea asks Brandon to translate the saying in French that he told her the night he described how Mallory had died. Part of that translation talked about how one's love for another should be "shouted from the mountaintops." Have you ever been so strongly in love that you, too, felt like climbing a mountain and loudly proclaiming your love for the entire world to hear?