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# Lesson 5

## Division

### Objective

- To observe and react to the effects grief can have on a family

### Notes to the Teacher

Often people feel that shared grief should always bring people together. Alice Sebold very realistically allows readers to see different people reacting very individually in bereavement, drawing the father and his two living children closer to one another while at the same time causing a rift between the mother and her family. The author has prepared the reader for this difference in that she has shown the mother's dissatisfaction with her life because the birth of her son interrupted her plans for greater independence. When the child she has been most able to relate to is murdered, her dissatisfaction turns to estrangement; she cannot settle down to her established life. This lesson asks students to trace those steps that cause division in the family.

Students work in small groups to answer handout questions and then participate in a whole-class discussion.

### Procedure

1. Conduct a discussion in which students note different reactions that people have to grief. Ask students why they think that sometimes people are drawn together and other times families fall apart.
2. Distribute **Handout 7**. Allow time for small-group work followed by whole-class discussion.

### Suggested Responses:

1. *Abigail becomes estranged from her husband and attracted to Len for at least five reasons:*
  - *She believes the police are right and that her husband's suspicions are unfounded.*
  - *Len has suffered the loss of his wife, and, in a strange sense, Abigail has lost her mate.*
  - *She must, as Susie remarks, flee from her dead child, who as her*

*firstborn had once been her best friend. She hopes Len can help her "drive the dead daughter out."*

- *For years, she had wanted to escape from her humdrum life as a housewife and mother; Buckley's birth has tied her down when she had hoped to be somewhat freed.*
  - *Jack's growing closer to Lindsey and Buckley makes Abigail feel even more alienated.*
2. *The chart of the growing division could include the following:*

*Father—He clings to times with Buckley, realizing that his son could also be taken. He quiets down about Mr. Harvey, merely recording his suspicions in a notebook. He shows interest in little things, like Lindsey's shaving her legs.*

*Mother—She seems to use her energy against her home the more her husband expends his for his home and children. She thinks often of Len because those thoughts bring at least temporary forgetfulness of her grief.*

3. *Grandma Lynn detects that Abigail is having an affair and tries to get close enough to her to get her to break down and admit it before it is too late. Then as she walks by Mr. Harvey's house, she senses a malevolence.*
  4. *Lindsey asks her father if he wants to be able to get into Mr. Harvey's house.*
3. Assign the reading of chapters 14–16.

## Division

**Directions:** As you may have observed, people react differently to grief. Some families draw closer in sharing their bereavement; others become estranged from one another. In some cases, the result is divorce and a complete breakup of the family unit. Discuss the following questions about what happens in the Salmon home with your group, and write your conclusions.

1. What four or five factors have contributed to Abigail's estrangement from her husband and attraction to Len Fenerman?

2. Chart the father's behaviors that show growth toward his home and children and the mother's further drift from them.

<b>Father (Mr. Salmon)</b>	<b>Mother (Mrs. Salmon)</b>

3. How does Grandma Lynn reveal that she is really a wise woman?

4. What does Lindsey say that may be foreshadowing of her joining her father's vendetta?