***The Language of Hoofbeats***

Book Club Questions

1. Jackie and Paula move their family from an urban area to a small rural town. How does the dynamic of the new setting affect both the children and the parents?
2. Why do you think Star chooses the horse as the one thing she cares about and can relate to? How is this different from the way Clementine feels about Comet?
3. “What *do* you like, Clem?” Vern asks his wife after her tirade about the new neighbors. What is the underlying statement her husband is trying to make?
4. Jackie and Paula have very distinct personalities and ways of dealing with life. How are these two characters different in their approach to parenting? How does this work in their favor as a couple? To their detriment?
5. In what ways does the barn serve as a symbol of loss and renewal?
6. Star takes the horse and runs away, escalating the conflict between the neighbors. How does Clem’s decision not to press charges reflect the changes that were happening within her? Does Clem’s choice of punishment benefit both her and Star?
7. How did the judgments and prejudices of both Jackie and Clem affect the way they interacted with each other? What do you think enabled them to rise above their judgments by the end of the book?
8. In regard to Clem, Jackie tells Quinn, “But maybe she’s lonely because she’s not very nice.” Quinn replies, “But maybe she’s not very nice because she’s lonely. Maybe if she wasn’t lonely, she’d be nicer.” Who do you think is right and why?
9. Jackie and Paula leave it up to the boys to decide whether to allow Star to come back and live with them after she leaves the hospital. One of the boys says, “Living in this family should be a no-matter-what kind of thing.” Do you agree with this decision? How does this fit with your vision of family?
10. In the end, Jackie and Paula are perplexed by Star’s choice to live with Clem. Paula explains it this way: “The devil you know being a safer bet than the devil you don’t know.” What do you think she means by this? How does it help explain the bond between Clem and Star?