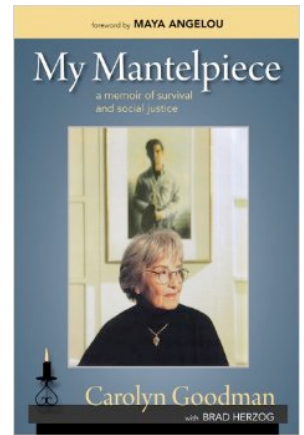


## MY MANTELPIECE

### Discussion Questions



#### Foreword

Maya Angelou closes by saying, “Not knowing that by standing up for Right, he’s actually doing the right thing for himself.” How did Carolyn Goodman live by this credo?

“**The Mantelpiece**” p. 8 – Carolyn describes life as “a wondrous, colorful, tragic, flawed, intimate and epic work of art.” What about her biography fits these descriptors? How was her life both intimate and epic?

“**Letting Him Go**” p. 17 - Carolyn permitted her son Andy to go to Mississippi because that is who he was and who she was as well. How does she demonstrate this in her memoir?

“**Pieces of Me**” p. 22 – After her brother Eddie died, Carolyn’s memory of this early loss is of the people around her avoiding the subject of his death. How did this early memory affect how she handled the losses later in her life? p. 23 – What did Carolyn mean when she said, “freedom spawned me”?

“**The Company of Men**” p. 34 – How was the fact that she preferred the company of men expressed in Carolyn’s life story? How do you think this was connected to her feelings about her mother and her father?

“**One Arm Over the Other**” p. 77- How does the metaphor of her swim test at Echo Lake apply to the events and obstacles in Carolyn’s life?

“**A Bar of Contentment in a Sea of Song**” p. 87- What does Carolyn’s choice of music at her funeral reveal about her life?

“**The Zest of Their Leaping Eyes**” p. 91 – As she thinks about her younger sister, Helene, Carolyn eventually realized that fortitude inspires more than achievement. Do you think that applies to Carolyn’s life as well?

p. 116 – How do Carolyn’s two surviving sons, Jonny and David, demonstrate their caring about distant injustices and the people closest to them, despite the major differences between them?

“**Footsteps**” What “footsteps” did Andy follow in his decision to go to Mississippi? How did her realization of this affect Carolyn’s dealing with Andy’s fate?

“**A Short While Towards the Sun**” Of all the tributes to Andy Goodman, which, in particular, resonated?

“**Saving Myself**” p. 161-After her husband Bobby died, Carolyn asked, “How will I know what is magnificent?” What do you think she meant by that? How did Carolyn save herself after the loss of her son and her husband?

“**Justice**” Why did Caroline choose to go to Mississippi for the first time in 1989? Do you think it was cathartic for her?

p. 179 – “...heroism is not a matter of traveling beyond the traditional limits of human experience; it’s about immersing oneself within the human experience.” How did Carolyn immerse herself within the human experience on this trip to Mississippi and at other times?

p. 187 - Did the outcome of the trial in 2005 help Caroline deal with the terrible events of 1964? Explain.

“**No Twilight**” p.191 – When told that his mother was arrested at age 83 protesting the killing of Guinean immigrant Amadou Diallo, David Goodman shrugged and said, “Well, that happens from time to time.” What do you infer about Carolyn and David from this description?

p. 196 – “What’s there to do? I would always wonder instead: Is there time to do everything?” Do you think Carolyn felt that she had time in her 91 years to do everything? Explain.