Discussion Questions

I'm Thinking of Ending Things by Iain Reid

1. Discuss the significance of the title. Why does Reid choose to call his novel "I'm Thinking of Ending Things"?

2. Who is the "Caller"? Describe the calls he makes to the girlfriend. How do these calls help to further the plot? Why doesn't the girlfriend tell Jake about the caller? Do you agree with her decision to keep the calls secret? Why or why not?

3. Why is the "Girlfriend" unnamed throughout the novel? What were your original impressions of her? When you finished reading *I'm Thinking of Ending Things*, did your feelings about her change? If so, in what ways and why?

4. There are conversations between strangers interspersed through the girlfriend's narration. What's the effect of including these conversations in the novel? How do they help you understand the story? Who do you think is speaking during these conversations?

5. Were you surprised by the ending of *I'm Thinking of Ending Things*? If so, were there any parts you found particularly shocking? What were they?

6. The girlfriend says, "I think a lot of what we learn about others isn't what they tell us. It's what we observe" (p.29). Do you agree? What do you learn about Jake and the girlfriend by seeing their interactions with Jake's parents? Are there other examples in *I'm Thinking of Ending Things* where the actions of a character tell you something about him or her? Discuss them with your book club.

7. When the girlfriend asks Jake if he thinks "secrets are inherently unfair, or bad or immoral in a relationship," his answer is, "I don't know. It would depend on the secret" (p. 30). What do you think? Are there circumstances where keeping a secret from your significant other is permissible? What are they? What secrets do Jake and the girlfriend keep from each other?

8. Jake describes himself as a "cruciverbalist" to the girlfriend when they first meet. Does his description give you any insight into his personality? If so, what does it tell you about Jake? What, if any, puzzles exist in the book that Jake attempts to solve? Is he successful?

9. Describe Jake's parents' farm. Was it what you expected? When Jake takes the girlfriend on a tour of the farm, she sees a chilling sight outside. How does this sight affect the girlfriend? Compare her reaction to seeing this sight to her reaction to Jake's story about how his father had to put the pigs on the farm down. Why do you think Jake tells her about the pigs?

10. In describing the events at the school, an unnamed speaker says, "This isn't about us" (p.89). Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?

11. While she is trapped in the school, the girlfriend says that "before tonight, when anyone asked me about the scariest thing that happened to me, I told them the same story. I told them about Ms. Veal. Most people I tell don't find this story scary" (p. 172). Why does the girlfriend think the incident with Ms. Veal was scary? Did you find it frightening? If so, why?

12. The girlfriend tells Jake, "I'm glad we don't know everything.... Questions are good. They're better than answers" (p. 35). Why does the girlfriend feel this way? Do you agree with her? Explain your answer. Are there any questions that the girlfriend should have asked as she was getting to know Jake? What would you have asked?

13. Describe the basement in Jake's parents' house. Why does Jake tell the girlfriend that there is nothing in the basement? What does she find? When the girlfriend is in the basement, she remembers having a conversation with Jake where he told her, "We depend on symbols for meaning" (p.107). What do you think makes her think of this particular conversation while she is in the basement? Are there any recurring symbols in *I'm Thinking of Ending Things*? Discuss them with your book club.

14. The girlfriend asks Jake, "How do we know when a relationship becomes real?" (p. 69). Discuss Jake's answer. What do you think it takes for a relationship to be "real"? Do you consider the relationship between Jake and the girlfriend to be a real one? Why or why not?

(*Questions issued by the publisher.*)