*Before Us**Like a Land of Dreams* Reading Guide:

1. From the first page, the Storyteller is haunted by the ghosts of deceased family members and the stories they have to tell. During a low point in her life, she actively seeks out these ghosts and their stories. Why do you think the Storyteller looks to the past when struggling with her present?
2. This story takes place largely in the American West and the people who helped settle it. Did you have any preconceptions about this land or the people who lived on it before starting this book? How did those preconceptions change upon reading the story?
3. In each of these stories, the families we view are tied to the land around them in one way or another. In fact, the land itself often seems to play a role in shaping their stories. Do you view your family with any connections to the land?
4. Near the end of his story, Olaf Larson gets rid of his father’s old things. Some are merely thrown out, while others are given a proper burial. Why do you think these objects played a part in his grief?
5. Throughout the story we are shown multiple perspectives and voices, each of them with their own intentions and opinions. Are there any voices that stood out to you as more believable or compelling than others? Any less believable or compelling? Why?
6. Due to the timeframe of each of the narratives, we are shown pieces of the West at times that were different from today, both in landscape and demographics. Do you feel this picture of the American West from the past reflects what it is today, or is your image of the West different?
7. Between each section, the Storyteller is told she must find a guide as she travels through the pasts of her family. Do you think it would be necessary to have a guide when traveling through the pasts of your family? Why or why not? What would your guide be like?
8. One thing all the stories in *Before Us Like a Land of Dreams* have in common is that they led to the birth and life of the Storyteller. You might say she is the product or culmination of all these stories. Do you feel you may be a culmination of the stories that have come before you? Why or why not? To what degree do you think we are shaped by those who have come before us?