

About the Book

Morning Leaves: Cultivating a Life of Beauty, Meaning, and Joy is an award-winning blend of reflection, poetry, and nature-inspired art. Through honesty and warmth, Laing Ridders invites readers to slow down and reconnect with the beauty of everyday life. Rooted in personal loss and shaped during a time of global uncertainty, the book explores healing, presence, creativity, and the quiet resilience required to begin again.

About the Author

Laing Ridders is an award-winning author whose work explores grief, resilience, and renewal through art, nature, and personal reflection. With a professional background spanning human resources, private equity, and entrepreneurship, she brings a deeply human perspective to change and growth. Through writing, workshops, and speaking, she helps individuals and communities transform loss into self-awareness, creativity, and renewed joy.

Reading Context

Morning Leaves was inspired by the loss of the author's younger sister in December 2019, followed by a period of lockdown with her family in Southern California. This convergence of grief and stillness reshaped her sense of identity, priorities, and self-care. Nature, creativity, and movement became essential pathways toward healing.

Discussion & Reflection Questions

Opening Reflections

- What were your expectations going into the book? How did the experience compare?
- What mood or feeling stayed with you after finishing?

Presence and Perspective

- The dedication refers to "*Today and Now*," and this idea returns at the end of the book. What does this framing suggest?
- Did the book shift your thinking about presence or attention in daily life?
- Do you believe joy is a choice? Why or why not?

Grief, Healing, and Bravery

- How does the book portray grief as an ongoing, evolving experience?
- Where did you see bravery in the author's journey? What felt most courageous?
- At times, the author imagines escape—into the clouds, under water, or into the trees. Did this feel like avoidance, restoration, or something else?

- What role did the pandemic play in shaping the emotional landscape of the book?

Creativity and Nature

- How did the artwork influence your experience of the book?
- Would the experience have been different with another form of visual expression, or none at all?
- Have you found creativity helpful in navigating difficult seasons?
- What is it about time in nature that can feel restorative or clarifying?

Identity, Family, and Reflection

- What role does motherhood play in the book?
- Do you relate to the daughter's perspective? In what ways can children act as mirrors?
- How does judgment—internal or external—show up in the narrative?

Symbols and Interpretation

- What is your interpretation of the wolf in the Ancient Pine?
- Were there images, metaphors, or recurring themes that stood out to you?

Personal Connection and Takeaways

- What part of the book did you most relate to?
- Was there a poem or passage that stayed with you? What about it resonated?
- How did you choose to read the book (slowly, all at once, revisiting sections)? How did that affect your experience?
- What has stayed with you since finishing?
- Would you revisit this book? Why or why not?

Closing Reflection

- Where do you see beauty functioning as a form of resilience in the book?
- What does renewal look like in your own life right now?
- Would you give this book as a gift? To whom, and at what moment in their life?
- Choose a line, image, or idea from the book that you would want to carry into your daily life. Why that one?