



## **IN THE LAND OF SECOND CHANCES**

**Author:** George Shaffner

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**Subject:** Americana/  
Personal Challenges (Fiction)

### **Summary**

The folks of Ebb, Nebraska have seen their fair share of hardship, but no one more so than Calvin Millet. His wife has left him and his terminally ill young daughter. His department store, the last in the area, is close to bankruptcy. His house has been destroyed by a tornado. Everyone watches Calvin's fortune wane with great interest, for in Ebb, everyone's fate is connected to his. Then Vernon Moore, a traveling salesman with a knack for asking life-altering questions, comes to town. Though Vernon leaves without making a sale, he leaves behind a town where second chances are not only possible; they can—and do—happen.

**Recommended by:** Phillip Gulley, author, *Harmony* series

*"In this humorous and touching tale, George Shaffner does for writing what Louie Armstrong and What a Wonderful World did for music. A song of a book."*

### **Author Biography**

George Shaffner lives in Sammamish, Washington. He's the author of *The Arithmetic of Life and Death*, which has been described by *American Way* as a "surprising philosophical exploration into how math affects and uncovers truths about our lives." *In the Land of Second Chances* is his first novel.

## Topics to Consider

- 1) Wilma Porter, owner of the Come Again Bed & Breakfast, is the narrator of the story. Why did the author choose to tell the story from her perspective?
- 2) Discuss how Vernon Moore was received by the various characters in Ebb. Did gender make a difference in how he was viewed and treated?
- 3) Mr. Moore could have represented other types of products for sale, but the author chose games of chance. Why?
- 4) Several characters struggled with truth-telling in their lives. Discuss the differences between Calvin sharing the truth directly with Lucy, Mona with her husband and boys, and Clem with Calvin.
- 5) Vernon often speaks of “reasoned faith” to address the existence of God and an afterlife, instead of traditional religion. What’s wrong with conventional “blind” faith, if anything? Why would anyone need “reasoned faith?”
- 6) When Lucy awakens, Calvin asks her a number of questions. What has he learned from Mr. Moore? What does he learn from Lucy?
- 7) Was Mr. Moore really a salesman? What did you believe about his past? What did he “sell” the people in the town of Ebb? Discuss how his presence made a difference in their lives and their future.
- 8) Wilma and Clem acknowledge the presence of Silas the Second. How does the ghost help shape the story?
- 9) Where is—and what is—the land of second chances?
- 10) Discuss your feelings about living with uncertainty. Is it truly the spice of life?
- 11) Has your view of an afterlife changed after reading *In the Land of Second Chances*? If so, what influenced you most?
- 12) On the final page, we learn that Wilma is taking her time responding to Clem’s proposal, and consults Mr. Moore’s hand-written message. Do you believe she marries him?