*The Last Of What I Am |* Book Club Questions

1. Did you find Tom Smiley’s ghost frightening or a sympathetic character?
2. Who was your favorite character–Tom or his sister Mary? And why?
3. Did Tom remind you of some soldiers who served in Vietnam, and in what way?
4. How did the Smiley family’s life change from the beginning of the war to the end?
5. What was the turning point for Tom when he finally realized what he was fighting to protect and for whom?
6. Why did Tom stay in the Confederate Army after he became disillusioned?
7. What do you think of Mary’s response to slavery? How often are we guilty of not imagining ourselves in others’ shoes? What harm does that do? Could she have done more for Sukie?
8. Do you think the family should have regretted their treatment of Ma when the soldiers were coming to the house and kept it secret, or should they have written it off as justified at the time and told Tom? Do you think that would have made a difference to him in keeping his secret?
9. How did Tom’s thinking change from the time he enlisted until his last days as a ghost in the house?
10. How did young Tom’s risk-taking get him in trouble at the beginning of the war and in its early days?
11. And then when he was in prison? Do you think he was right to take those chances that got Bibb killed?
12. Why did Tom lose himself in guilt about Bibb’s death? What was he keeping himself from feeling?
13. What would you have done to rid your house of a ghost? Would you have done something different from what Phoebe did? Or would you have just ignored it?
14. Did you learn something from reading this book that you hadn’t previously known? What was it?