

1. At sixteen, Sissie feels pressured to determine her life's purpose. How does this inform her choices?
2. Upon learning she is pregnant, those around Sissie express differing opinions. Consider how each would alter Sissie's trajectory.
3. Kathleen shares a family secret with Sissie. How does this knowledge alter Sissie's outlook? Change her relationship with her mother? Alter her view of her parents' marriage?
4. Do Thomas and Kathleen act out of love or control? What motivates them to help Caleb?
5. Is Della a good friend to Sissie? How does the friendship change through the years?
6. What keeps Sissie in the marriage? What would it take for her to divorce Caleb?
7. Love takes many forms in this novel. Consider how it supports Sissie? Holds her back? Encourage her growth? Nudges her toward forgiveness?
8. Compare Caleb and Sissie's parents. How have their marital and parenting styles affected their children? Caleb and Sissie's marriage?
9. Sissie and her brother haven't been especially close. Why? What changes their relationship?
10. Throughout the second half of the book, Meg repeats a Dr. Seuss quote, "Sometimes the questions are hard, and the answers are simple." Do you agree?
11. Does Thomas's alliance with Caleb betray Sissie? Why would he keep Caleb's secret?
12. Do you agree with the way Sissie explains her pregnancy to Meg? How would you handle it?
13. Put yourself in Meg's size-8 (adult) shoes. How would you tell the story of your life?
14. How does Harlan change Sissie's outlook? Does he hold her back? Is she fair to him?
15. At the end of the novel, Sissie evaluates her life's purpose. Reflect upon expectations you had for yourself at sixteen—lessons you learned along the way, epiphanies, pivotal moments along the way. How are you and Sissie alike? How are you different?