

QUESTIONS FOR BOOK GROUPS

Don't belong to a book group? If you give a copy of this book to a friend, you then have an excuse to share your reactions to this story over a cup of coffee, a glass of wine or a lunch hour. You two might even invite a wider circle to join in, and that would be ... a book group, ready to share thoughts on this and other books.

1. Jenny is moved by the use of weaving and spinning imagery to describe meiosis, the sorting and uniting of the strands of DNA from each parent at fertilisation. Will this bring her closer to Max's philosophy of life? Do you think she is losing objectivity or gaining insight?
2. Jenny says she and her mother Caroline are 'moving on to a more adult mother/daughter relationship'. What is your assessment of Caro's relationship with Jenny? Does it progress in the book? What does Hattie add to our picture of the family?
3. Jenny appears to have a good relationship with her stepfather, Des. But which father is more worthy of respect by the end of the story: Des, or Jenny's biological father, Dr Guthrie?
4. How does each of them perceive being a dad?
5. 'Cross stitch, how apt,' Fee thinks. Daze painted a child crucified on a woman. What do these images say about the lives of women and children, and/or how they see themselves? Does the image of crucifixion (the way Christ was killed) speak to us today? What image would you choose?
5. Daze's story is told in the third person. Why do you think that might be? Do we ever get a real understanding of her motivations? What do you think they might be?
6. Do you think Max simply gave into family pressure on him to become a GP, or is it his own considered decision? Suppose he had followed his earlier school ambitions and pursued a career in music?
7. Max is obviously drawn to research into genetic malformations and their prevention. Why does he capitulate to Nicholson's hints about the ethical side of the research? Should he have? What motivates Max's practice of medicine?
8. Max observes that 'what goes on at home isn't a faith, it's a culture.' Has he only just gained this insight? If not, at what stage in his life do you think he began to see it? What is the difference between a faith and a culture?
9. Max's father, Alisdair, believes he has a vocation. How much do you trust his confession near the end of the story?
10. Jenny decides to marry Max after all. How do you envisage their future together?