



Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think Barbara has such specific expectations for her daughter? When does Evelyn successfully push back against these, and how? Why do you think Evelyn comes to hold some of the same values as her mother? How does the Barbara-Evelyn relationship shift as the novel goes on? Do you have sympathy for Barbara?
2. Evelyn considers, at one point, how easy it would be if she could marry Preston. Do you think this would be a good pairing? Can marriages of convenience like this work? Should Preston's sexuality, or Evelyn's assessment of Preston's sexuality, figure into her thinking more?
3. How porous is social class in America? Could Evelyn have made different decisions that would have allowed her to ultimately fit in in Camilla's circle?
4. At the end, Charlotte updates Evelyn and tells her that all her former friends are just fine. Still, the financial crisis is coming. How do you think the characters who stay in New York make it through that? Do you think they are as untouchable as Charlotte seems to think? Now, several years after the financial crisis, do you see certain groups who haven't been affected and certain groups who have?
5. When we first meet Evelyn, she feels overlooked: "But it would be nice to have a place for once, to have people look at her and think she was interesting and worth talking to, not to have them politely fumble for details about her life and get them wrong and instantly forget her. (Murray Hill, right? No, the Upper East Side. Ah, and Bucknell? No, Davidson.)" Why is that important to her? Does she achieve this place she's looking for? Have you struggled with a similar goal? What happened?
6. Why does Scot end up accepted by this group in the end? What does he bring to the table that Evelyn does not?



7. Did you find Evelyn likable? Why or why not? How important is it to you as a reader that a book's protagonist be likeable? What are books you've liked where the main character is unlikable? Do you have different expectations about likability for male and for female protagonists?
8. Do you think Dale committed bribery? Why or why not? How important is the question of her father's guilt or innocence to Evelyn?
9. Charlotte seems to see herself as a moral arbiter in the book. Do you agree with her moral stance? Is she a good friend to Evelyn? Are there ways that Evelyn is a good friend to her?
10. At one point Evelyn puzzles over why debutante balls still exist when young women are hardly kept behind closed doors until age eighteen. What's your take on this? Why do they continue to occur?
11. As Evelyn watches her father's sentencing, she wonders why he's receiving such a harsh punishment when others who have erred are not. "Why were the consequences so severe for him?" she asks. Is that something you see elsewhere in the novel—that rules apply to one set of people but not another? Are there current events where this apply? Or do you think she's making excuses for her father—and for herself?
12. Is Camilla and Evelyn's friendship genuine? Why or why not? Have you had short-term friendships? Why didn't they work out? What makes for a real and lasting friendship?
13. Do you think Evelyn and Scot are well-paired as a couple? At the novel's end, after Evelyn has changed, would you see them working out?