

READING GROUP QUESTIONS FOR *PALISADES PARK*

1. Was there a place like Palisades Park where you grew up? What did it mean to you?
2. Was Eddie justified in running away from home? Was he justified in refusing all contact with his mother and stepfather? What would you have done?
3. How was the Palisades “family” of workers and concessionaires like a real family, and how was it different?
4. Have you ever had a dream or ambition in life that you never pursued (or did)?
5. Are you a parent? Would you have encouraged or discouraged your daughter from pursuing the dangerous life of a high diver?
6. Can you imagine being a daredevil like Toni? Could you have defied social conventions of the time to live the life she led?
7. Do you think Eddie was right or wrong in enlisting in the Navy? Can you understand Adele’s angry response to it?
8. What was your reaction to Adele’s abandonment of her family?
9. Why did the author include the (true life) role the Mafia played in the history of the park (especially as regards the later civil rights protests)?
10. How does Toni’s stand against the park’s policy about African-Americans fit in with other incidents in her life?
11. Jack’s postwar illness was once called “shell shock” and would today be diagnosed as post-traumatic stress disorder. How has the treatment of this veteran’s disability changed (or not) since the Korean War?
12. Compare and contrast the dreams and desires of each member of the Stopka family and how they changed over the course of the story.
13. Would the lives of Eddie, Adele, Toni and Jack have been different if not influenced by Palisades Park? How?