



1. Leo Tolstoy famously declared that happy families are all alike but that each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way. Does Cass's family situation in *POISON* confirm that quote for you?
2. What kind of a father is Ryan? Is it an open-and-shut question because of what he does to Cass, or is father a very different role for him than husband? Can fatherhood justify its own moral code?
3. Niederhoffer writes specifically from Cass's point of view. How does this closely aligned narrator affect your experience of the story? Does it contribute to the confusion surrounding her perceptions? Is Cass the ultimate unreliable narrator or the most accurate reporter? Somewhere in between?
4. How does the book question the nature of sanity? Morality? Does the book have a "message" about constructs like this? How does the book posit that there is a spectrum for "good," "evil," "sane," and "insane" and why our culture needs to cling to binary black-and-white constructs?
5. Is this book a traditional thriller? A blend of genres? What is the "mcguffin" in this book? Is it the murder weapon or Cass's sanity? How do the open-ended questions in this book create suspense? How does the crafting of the plot and the timing of revelations contribute to the reader's experience?
6. Statistically, wives stay in abusive marriages longer if there are children in the family. What kind of lesson do you think the children learn from that situation? What insights does this book offer about domestic violence? Is it a book about domestic violence or murder? Does this book advance the current and pressing interest in #Whyistayed?
7. Identify a moment in the book where you thought Cass might be paranoid, and another where you thought she was in mortal danger. How does the author craft a book that is open to multiple interpretations? How does this create tension? How does this implicate the reader in the bias that is Cass's greatest antagonist? How does Niederhoffer's treatment of Cass's perceptions create tension in the book?

Discussion Questions



8. Is the book open to multiple interpretations? How does Cass's experience relate to your own life?
9. Does the book have a moral message? A political message? What is it?