



1. What is it about the sisters' relationship that makes it so ripe for storytelling?
2. Throughout their childhood, Ruth and Millie's mother has vastly different expectations for them, especially in terms of the kind of men they will marry. Do you think she bears some of the blame for the poor relationship between her daughters? What about their father?
3. When Millie first meets Lenny, she is lonely and mourning the loss of her neighbor. Why else do you think Millie falls for Lenny? Why does she agree to marry him?
4. Do you think it was wrong of Ruth's mother to expect her to bring Millie with her to her new home? Why was it so important for Ruth to have a fresh start in Springfield? Did being Jewish make it harder for Ruth to fit in at the armory?
5. Do you think Ruth's lies to Lenny and her sister are excusable? If you were Millie, would you ever be able to forgive Ruth for what she did?
6. Do you think Millie's secrets about Lenny and her marriage are more or less justifiable than the secrets Ruth keeps?
7. In what ways do Arietta and Lillian serve as substitute sisters for Millie? Why do you think they are so protective of her? How does the war bring these women together?
8. How does Lillian's past shape her as an adult? Do you think she would have been able to defend Millie the way she does at the end of the story had it not been for her own unfortunate childhood experiences?
9. Ruth and Millie can't seem to escape the roles they took on as children. Do you think family members always fall into set patterns of behavior? Can the

Discussion Questions



patterns ever be broken, or are we destined to play the same roles within our family units from childhood through old age?

10. When Millie first arrives in Springfield, she has no money and almost no luggage. Do you think Ruth truly understands Millie's predicament? Should she have been more generous? Why are class differences among adult family members so difficult to overcome?
11. How do Grace's prejudices affect her actions? Why do you think she was so jealous of Millie? Should Ruth have come to her sister's defense sooner?
12. Do you think Millie and Ruth will be able to move beyond their past grievances and have a sincere and positive relationship in the future?