1. *Wake the Bones* is an atmospheric Southern gothic. What are some of the characteristics of Southern gothic? How does Elizabeth Kilcoyne use them in this book?

2. Life and death— rot and growth— are common themes throughout the novel, especially through Laurel’s work. How do you see life and death portrayed in *Wake the Bones*? Are they opposites? Did your understanding of the relationship between life and death change after finishing the book?

3. Laurel is afraid of the future, but towards the end she is excited for “the future yet to be written.” (p. 304). How does her perception of the future change, and why?

4. What do you believe would have happened if Laurel hadn’t dropped out of college? Would the devil have found her anyway?

5. Christine describes her work at the C-store as a “hard-earned scrap of belonging” (p. 136). How else do the different characters in *Wake the Bones* try to belong? How does belonging or not belonging—to Dry Valley, to a family, to their land—affect them?

6. Laurel says magic killed her mother. Ricky believes it was Dry Valley. Do you agree with either one? Why? What do Laurel and Ricky’s beliefs on what killed Laurel’s mother say about their home, and about magic?
7. Each of the main characters have their own complicated relationship with their home, a relationship that often involves destruction. Why do you think that is? How does their relationship with Dry Valley change as the novel progresses?

8. The two main romantic relationships in the novel are Laurel and Ricky, and Garrett and Isaac. How do you think these couples serve as foils to one another? Which couple do you relate to the most?

9. Neither Laurel nor Ricky know whether Laurel brought him back. What do you believe happened? How do you see their relationship playing out after the events of *Wake the Bones*?

10. At the end, Laurel is torn between exploring the world or heading back to her home, wondering if she could demand more. Do you believe Laurel will ever leave Dry Valley? Do you believe she should? Discuss.

11. Christine has magic, and is able to make little miracles happen. “In other words,” her grandma says, “a woman” (pg. 43). What do you think Christine’s grandma meant by this? How are Christine and Laurel, two women with powers, similar? How are they different?

12. As Jay said in the beginning, Laurel and her friends are adults, and adults work. How do you see the main characters confronting their newfound adulthood? How does it shape their relationships with and/or understanding of the other adults in their life—for example, Laurel with her mother, Isaac with his father, Christine with her granny?