



1. The story is told from several different female points of view across three generations, all connected by the same house. Which point of view is your favorite? Why?
2. The “Chin up!” refugee mind-set is repeated throughout the novel. Which scenes showcase this mind-set most strongly for you? Which characters thrive because of it? Which characters are burdened by it?
3. The house is central to the story and is arguably a character in its own right. How is it personified? What does it pass on to the next generation who will call it “their own” one day?
4. The mother-daughter relationship is a complicated theme in this novel. Ida and Hildegard; Hildegard, Vera, and Marlene; and Marlene and Anne all experience painful life lessons at the hands of this relationship. Each is a strong female character. What do they learn from one another?
5. What value does Vera bring to Anne’s life? What value does Anne bring to Vera’s life?
6. How is Vera’s relationship with the house different from the other women in her family who have passed through it?
7. Many of the male characters in the novel prove to be disappointments for our female protagonists. Which male characters disappointed you? Which male characters impressed you?
8. How do you feel about the Dear Vera letters? Why do you think Hildegard was able to connect with Vera through letters but not in person? Why did she keep their contents from Marlene?

*Discussion
Questions*



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9. Nature in the Altland is described beautifully throughout the story: cherries ripening, apples reddening, buds swelling. Which is your favorite description? Where do you see it shown that Altlanders “hadn’t simply discovered the land on which they lived, [but that] they had made it”?
10. For most of the novel, the house whispers, and in general seems to have a strong distaste for change. What is the significance of the house “standing still” at the end?