

1. In your opinion, what is the significance of the title *Private Rites*? What expectations did it set for you of the novel to come? Does it hold new meaning now, after finishing?
2. We move back and forth between the three sisters' perspectives. How are those perspectives similar and different? Were you particularly drawn to one of the sisters? If so, why?
3. At several points, we hear from the perspective of the City. What does that narration add to the story, and what does it help us learn about the world within the novel?
4. The novel's epigraph comes from Shakespeare's *King Lear*, which is also a story about the three daughters of a famous man and an inheritance conflict that drives a wedge between them. If you are familiar with *King Lear*, discuss the parallels between that story and this one. Would you consider this to be a kind of retelling or reimagining? Why or why not?
5. On page 26, Irene lists some of the frustrations of speaking to her family members: "A person can be thirty, thirty-five, and yet still largely described by her sisters in terms of things that happened to be true at the age of seventeen." How do we see this taking place between the sisters in the novel? Do you relate?
6. Agnes is often portrayed as the "outsider" of the siblings. Why do you think Irene and Isla don't seem to accept or trust her? Why do you think their father decided to give Agnes his house?
7. As readers, we only learn about the sisters' parents through flashbacks. What sorts of memories about the parents are we presented with? What commentary is the book making about how much our parents shape us as people, both in life and after their death?
8. All three sisters have very different relationships with their partners. Which of the partners, if any, seem involved or well integrated into the dynamic between the siblings? What does the novel suggest about how much a partner can understand your dynamic with a sibling?
9. Though the book opens with their father's death and references Isla and Irene's mother's death several times, the sisters don't really grieve in the traditional sense. In what ways are the sisters shown grieving their parents' deaths, or grieving their lack of a cohesive family structure more generally?
10. How does Armfield show the slow decline of the city narratively throughout the book? What effect does this have on the plot and the relationships between the characters? Would you consider the novel to be "dystopian"? How is it familiar and different from our world?
11. In the final scenes, the sisters reflect on how all three of them are "again, in this house that wants to kill them." How does the novel reframe the trope of the family home as a shelter or safe space? What function does the family home have throughout the book?
12. At the end of the book, we learn the sisters have been being watched not only since their father's death but throughout their entire lives. How does the book build this sensation of surveillance? Were you surprised by that last scene at the house?
13. What do you think the future holds for these characters and this world?