

The Ditchdigger's Daughters by Yvonne S. Thornton

Discussion Questions

1. Did you enjoy reading the book? What was your favorite part? What didn't you like about it?
2. Are any of the events in the book relevant to your own life?
3. Does the book appeal more to your emotions or your intellect (does it make you /feel/ or make you /think/)? How and why?
4. Was the author fairly descriptive in the way she wrote the book? Was she better at describing the concrete or the abstract? Was the author clear about what she was trying to say, or were you confused by some of what you read? How did this affect your reading of the book?
5. How did the structure (grammar, dialect, etc.) affect the way you read and understood the story? Did it have any impact on how you viewed the characters?
6. This book was written as a tribute to the author's family; why do you think she chose to tell this story?
7. This story was written from the specific perspective of one daughter. How do you think the book would have been different if other points of view were telling part of the story, or if the story was told from a different perspective?
8. What is stronger in the book, plot or character development? Why?
9. Does the book leave you wanting to know more about the lives of the characters?
10. What are the most important relationships in the book? How did the parent-child relationships compare with the sister-sister relationships? How do some of the relationships change throughout the book?
11. How are the characters independent from or dependent upon each other?
12. How do the characters complement one another and help one another develop through the story (or not)?
13. Did the characters make choices you might not have agreed with? How might the daughters' lives changed had other choices been made?
14. The author's father had a definite plan for his daughters - he wanted them to succeed in very specific ways. Does it seem as though any of the daughters resented him? Do you think he was disappointed that not all of his daughters became doctors?
15. Consider the family members and the family as a whole: What do they believe in? What are they willing to stand up for or to fight for? How do their beliefs change (or not) from the beginning to the end of the story?
16. A lot of music was incorporated into the Thornton lifestyle. How do you think this helped form a cohesive family unit? And how do you think music influenced their lives, decisions, and relationships?
17. What effects did events (time, nationality, physicality) have on a character's self or personality and decisions? How did culture guide much of their lives?