



## Kind of Kin

By Rilla Askew  
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### Questions for Discussion

1. The story opens with Sweet quoting her father's declaration that he is a felon *because* he's a Christian. Is this true? Why has Bob Brown taken the stance he's taken? Why has Sweet taken the stance she's taken and how does her understanding of her father's actions change through the course of the novel? How does she view her father's actions in the end?

2. The book has multiple characters, points of view, and story lines, and yet they all coalesce to create one essential story. Whose story is it? Why? In what ways does the community of Cedar become a character in the book?

3. The novel addresses a number of societal issues in addition to immigration. What are some of them?

Are there similar issues at play today?

4. How does Sweet's family reflect the "contemporary American family"? How are they like other families? How are they different? What constitutes our idea of a "contemporary American family"?

5. Late in the novel, as Sweet observes the protestors outside the church, she thinks to herself that she and they are 'the same kind of kin.' (p. 352) What does she mean? What does the book seem to be saying about kinship?

6. Religion plays a big role in the lives of many of the characters. Discuss the ways the characters approach their faith. How do they differ? In what ways are they the same? Discuss the role of prayer, the church, and Scripture in the novel and in the lives of the different characters.

7. In the section called "Welcome the Stranger," the preacher quotes Scripture to support his actions. Are there other biblical passages that might relate to some of the questions raised in the novel either in support of the actions the pastor takes, or in opposition to them?

8. The nature of sin is considered by the characters throughout the novel. Discuss Sweet's understanding of sin. What is Dustin's understanding? Luis's? Bob Brown's?

9. Why does Terry report Sweet's father to the authorities? Is it racism? Fear? Self-preservation in a scarce economy? All of the above? How do each of these themes shape our positions? Are they more powerful than our faith?

10. Consider the young woman who died as a result of the raid. Is illegal immigration solely a faith issue or a human rights issue as well? Are those mutually exclusive? What challenge does this offer those who do not consider themselves persons of faith?

11. Concerning Monica's character, should faith inform a lawmaker's position in relationship to bills like the immigration bill proposed? If so, to what extent?

12. Both Pastor Garcia and Bob Brown consider themselves religious men who are doing God's will. How much assistance should a person of faith give an undocumented worker? What if their political/personal views contradict what their faith tells them to do? Discuss how Brown's actions affect Dustin. When immigration laws limit how much assistance you can provide, how should a person of faith handle such a situation as Robert John Brown's?