

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

1. What were your associations with country music before reading the book? Did you know about its connections to the northwestern United States?
2. How much of success in music or other performing arts is due to luck versus hard work, do you think? Did Lillian have any breaks along the way?
3. By the novel's end, Lillian has confronted more than one trauma from her childhood. Which one do you think was the most formative in who she became? Do you think anything has shifted in how artists think about and confront trauma now, versus in Lillian's time?
4. Did you wish that Lillian and Charlie had gotten together romantically in their twenties or thirties? Do you think they were victims of circumstance, or did something else keep them apart?
5. What does Kaori represent to Lillian as a member of a new generation of musicians and a new generation of women? Do you think Kaori is correct that Lillian doesn't help other women in music—that she wants them to undergo all the challenges she did?
6. The tour bus is a place where the band forges a sense of community. Have you ever had a bonding experience like this? If so, what was the setting?
7. Lillian makes sacrifices for music over and over again. Did you feel by the novel's end that the sacrifices had been worth it to her?
8. What did you think of Lillian's creative process? When you've undertaken something creative, what's your process?
9. At least two of the book's scenes include moments where Lillian is in the middle of a pivotal historical moment, the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the assassination of JFK. Do you remember where you were during important historical moments of your own lifetime? How did they seem to you in the moment, versus in retrospect?
10. The men in the band think that "Old Paint" is the saddest song they know. What do you think is the saddest song ever written? What about the happiest?
11. When Lillian goes to visit Althea in 1980, is she looking for some sort of forgiveness from her former bandmate? Do you think she gets it?
12. How do you think the northwestern landscape of her youth and young adulthood shapes Lillian? What is Lillian's conception of the West at the beginning of the novel, versus at the end?