



THEMES	
Generosity	Loss
Healing	Truth/Lying
Power of writing	Self determination

Discussion Questions

1. In the beginning of the book, when Louisiana warns that “a great deal of this story is extremely sad,” did you believe her (page 9)? What kind of story did you think you were about to read?
2. Louisiana tells herself that “there is goodness in many hearts. In most hearts. In some hearts” (page 18). Which feels the most accurate to you?
3. Louisiana says: “There are the rescuers in this world and there are the rescued. I have always fallen into the second category” (page 20). Which category do the other characters in the book fall into? Which category would you rather be in? Why?
4. Louisiana believes “there is a great deal of power in writing things down” (page 29). Do you agree? What are some important things that need to be written down? What would you like to write down? Can you think of anything that would lose its power if it weren't written down?
5. Throughout the book, Louisiana references the story of Pinocchio. Why has it made such an impression on her? How is it similar to her own story?
6. At the dentist's office, Louisiana engages in a battle of the wills with Mrs. Ivy, the receptionist. How did you feel about that scene when you read it? Why was Mrs. Ivy so unkind? Was Louisiana right to make up a fake person and address so they wouldn't have to pay the bill?
7. Bernice tells Louisiana that she has no interest in hard-luck stories. Does Bernice have a hard-luck story of her own? What might make someone so unwilling to help out another person?
8. Louisiana used to keep a collection of the things she found under motel beds, but she threw it away when she thought she and Granny had finally settled somewhere for good. Have you ever collected anything? How would you feel if your collection disappeared?
9. What was your first impression of Burke Allen? How did it change as you read the book?
10. When Louisiana sings at the church for Bernice and Miss Lulu, they are both overcome with emotion. Did you expect them to treat Louisiana differently after that? Why are people with talents (like singing or being good at art) sometimes treated differently?



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11. Burke never says why he wants to join a circus or what kind of circus performer he'd like to be. Why do you think he wants to run away? Which circus act would he be good at?
12. Do you believe Louisiana was cursed? What about Granny?
13. Is one type of lie different from another? What does Louisiana mean when she wonders, "If you are the kind of person who lies about something as small as bologna, what would stop you from lying about bigger, more important things?" (page 102).
14. After Louisiana gets to know Burke Allen better, she realises he is "the kind of person who, if you asked him for one of something, gave you two instead" (page 108). What does that tell you about him?
15. What did you think Granny's letter was going to say? How did you feel after you read it? Did Louisiana react the same way you would have if you had gotten a letter like that from the person who was supposed to take care of you?
16. In Granny's letter, she writes, "Please remember this: someone put you down in that alley, but I picked you up. And perhaps what matters when all is said and done is not who puts us down but who picks us up" (page 123). What does Granny mean by that? Do you agree with her?
17. Granny's letter is blown away and lost to Louisiana. Does that affect the power that Granny's words have over her? If there's power in writing things down, what happens if the writing is gone?
18. Reverend Obertask tells Louisiana that "it is a good and healing thing to tell your story" (page 164). How does sharing your story help to heal you? How does Louisiana feel once she finally does tell her story to Reverend Obertask?
19. Despite her situation, Louisiana thinks, "The world was beautiful. It surprised me, how beautiful it kept on insisting on being. In spite of all the lies, it was beautiful" (pages 169–170). What does it say about Louisiana that she is able to appreciate beauty even when she's in despair?
20. The first time Burke tries to get Louisiana to climb the motel sign, she says no, but at the end of the story they climb to the top of a tree together. How has Louisiana changed from one scene to the other?
21. Louisiana realizes that she took her fear of heights for granted—and when she puts it to the test, she discovers a bravery within herself. What other things do we take for granted about ourselves without always checking if they're still true? What else might Louisiana discover about herself now that she is questioning everything?
22. If you were to ask Louisiana the difference between being left behind and being the one doing the leaving, what would she say? Would she think one is better than the other?
23. Louisiana experiences a lot of kinds of loss over the course of the story: losing things, losing people, getting lost in the woods, and feeling lost in her own life. How does she react to them differently? How do different types of loss affect us in different ways?
24. Did you think Louisiana would decide to stay with the Allens? How did you feel about her decision?
25. Were you glad when you read that Louisiana had been telling her story for Granny the whole time? If telling your story is healing, what about hearing someone else's? How could that be its own kind of healing?