

***Eve's Daughters* Discussion Questions**

The notion of "home" is an important theme throughout the book and the events of the story are set in motion during Emma's move. What is so important to each woman about the notion of home? Where do each of the women feel most comfortable? Does Bremenville end up as a home to any of them?

The "crying cup" is the only heirloom to make the journey from Germany and survive through the generations. What is its special significance, especially in the lives of Louise and Emma? What is the real source of its "magical" powers?

Louise and her brother, Emil, played a game called Someday where they spoke aloud their wishes for the future. All the characters gave similar wishes for their futures. Which character's wishes came closest to working out? Who's were furthest away from her childhood dreams? In what ways did they help or hinder each other's quest for their dreams?

One of the two memories Emma has of her childhood is the delivery of piano from the Sears Roebuck Co.. Musical talent was one of Emma's gifts but it gained added importance after a traveling Chautauqua visited Bremenville. Did music ever really fulfill all she desired of it? Throughout the years how did her use of her talents change? Was she ever able to return to her pure love of it?

The river running through Bremenville means different things at different times to the characters. Does the river itself change or is it merely the character's perception of the river? What did Squaw Island come to represent out, alone in the middle of the water? When a character remarks that the river reminds her of the saying "Joy and sorrow come and go like the ebb and flow" (p. 427) of which would you say the river has seen more?

Grace is defined by her neatness and propriety. Suzanne makes the comment that you can tell she's dressed for work because her "pearls are fake." (8) What does this say about her personality? What does it mean when she accepts the "depression glass" from her mother even though she knows Stephen won't like them? Why do the little trinkets have so much value for her?

Each woman in the story is both mother and daughter. Which role does each woman seem to fill most easily? What lessons from each woman's childhood reappear in their parenting? How is Emma's relationship with Suzanne unique in the book?

"Let's face it," Suzanne says, "times change, roles change, expectations change. What's right for one generation isn't necessarily right for the next one." (111) All

four women are from different generations with different cultural expectations for women. In what ways did each woman meet their roles and expectations and in what ways did they defy them? How has the definition of womanhood changed since the 1890s? Are women better off today than they were?

Three wars (WWI, WWII, and the Vietnam War) are in the background history of the novel. Though not involved in the immediate conflict, each woman is deeply touched, and in fact, irreparably changed by these events. What is each character's perception of the wars they live through? Are their views affected more by popular perception, the views of the men in their lives, or their own opinions? Who's life is affected most deeply?

Grace is perhaps the most aptly named of the four women. In what ways does she end up representing her name? Do the other women live up to their namesakes? (Louise means protectress. Emma means all-embracing. Suzanne means trusting.)

Suzanne is a modern career woman with a high-level job in a magazine. What about her career does she love most? How does her career separate her from Grace? How is her work different from that taken on by Emma during her life?

We see the sins of the parent being passed on to the child in the lives of Emma, Grace, and Suzanne. How is this theme echoed in other families in the book? Why do the victims (Eva, Grace, Markus) always seem to be innocent? Who sees them that way and are they truly innocent?

Just as sin can pass through generations by secrets and lies, so too can positive traits through strong upbringing. Louise makes a courageous and difficult choice to love her husband (p. 109) that is echoed by the other women throughout the story. What courageous acts do Emma, Grace, and Suzanne make? How is Grace's different from the rest?

It has been said that how you view your father is a blueprint for how you view God. Explain how this is true or false for each of the women in the novel? How is situation most complicated for Grace and how does she seem to develop the most solid faith? In what ways do the men in the book (Friedrich, Karl, Thomas, Jeff, Stephen) reflect the nature of God?

Suzanne is the spark that drives the discoveries of the novel. Is this simply a part of her personality or does her need to discover the truth come from something deeper? Why doesn't Grace feel more compelled to search out answers when the discoveries affect her so much?

At the beginning of the novel Emma sees her lies almost as a rickety building which would "teeter and sway" (14). At the same time Suzanne's marriage is shattered as well, like the plate she throws down in anger. Emma herself states that it's not a problem of people as much as pattern. What pattern is repeated through the marriages of these women? Louise and Grace seem to avoid it—do they really?