

1. Tess and her father lived the “always-changing” lifestyle common to military families. How do you think this affected Tess growing up? How would it have affected you? Why do you think Tess has had so many varied jobs and why has she changed her college major so many times?
2. Why do you think Tess has had so many varied jobs and why has she changed her college major so many times?
3. Tess attaches heavy symbolic significance to a mother's purse. Discuss reasons why she does that. What are some other things common to mothers that a child might attach extra meaning to?
4. When still mired in his own remorse, Simon accuses Tess of being “in love” with her pain? What does he mean by that? Is he right?
5. What do you think of Blair's assumption that God is punishing her for keeping the locket and note? Why would she think this?
6. Tess lives with an inordinate sense of guilt regarding her mother's death. How does she cope with it? How do men and women differ in the way they deal with guilt, real or imagined?
7. Of the three women — Tess, Blair or Jewel — whom do you identify with most? Who are you most like?
8. Corinthia Mayhew plays a significant role in Tess's lifelong search to find a remedy for her regret. What do you like about Corinthia? Is there anything you don't like about her?
9. Discuss Corinthia's belief that people who live apart from God take on and master one of His characteristics as a way of filling the void that this “apartness” creates. Do you agree?
10. Did you clue in to the source of Tess's misplaced guilt before she and Corinthia figured it out? What do you think of Tess's reaction to the truth? How would you have reacted? What is your opinion of her father, Mark Longren? On a scale of 1 to 10, how much sympathy do you feel for him?
11. Discuss what might be the significance of Tess's interest in maps. Where might this fascination stem from?
12. Though shocked, Tess's Uncle Martin welcomes her into his house and heart. Was this the reaction you expected? How would the story have been different if he had not welcomed her? Would Tess still have found peace?