

Tough Love

Book Discussion Questions

1) In what ways is Kate like the raw and grisly characters that populate her childhood? In what ways is she different?

2) Discuss Kate's role as an only child. How do you see it influenced her childhood? What were the positives? What were the negatives?

3) How do you respond to Kate's feelings toward her grandparents? Is she too harsh? Are her emotions understandable?

4) How do you relate to Kate's response to the old-timers in *Fish Fry at Uncle John's*? Discuss a time you were either especially reluctant or especially joyful to see older relatives.

5) How do you respond to Kate's mom's reaction to Kate's behavior in *The Blue Rug*? What would you have done if you were her mother?

6) Talk about the character of Grandpa Bucky. Does he, in fact, go crazy?

7) Was Grandpa Bucky's suicide a selfish act?

8) Growing up in rural Wyoming, Kate felt her identity was closely tied to place. Think about the theme of "place" in your own life and discuss how place—where you grew up, where you now live, places of special memories (perhaps a grandparent's or relative's house)—does or does not define you.

9) Discuss the theme of "tough" and how it relates to the characters in the book.

10) What does it mean to be tough? Consider society's definition of the term and how it compares to your own.