



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

for

GEOGRAPHIES OF THE HEART

By Caitlin Hamilton Summie

1. How are Sarah and Glennie alike? How are they different?
2. Sarah thinks she is the strong sister. Is she?
3. How much does fear define relationships in this novel? Why?
4. This novel is about Sarah's love of family but also about sisters and generations of family. Discuss.
5. Both Al and Glennie struggle with body image and weight. Why is body image and weight so important in America today?
6. Why does Al matter to the story?
7. What does this novel say about faith? Love? Endurance?
8. Part of this novel deals with friendships, or the lack of friendships. Sarah has one close buddy, Ann. Al struggles with friendships and Glennie has few. Does this put more pressure on their family lives?
9. Why did the author choose this title?
10. Much of this novel deals with loss, but it is also laced with a wonderful humor. How do the Macmillans and Nelsons keep their perspective? What happens when they don't?
11. How does this novel treat aging?
12. What does this novel say about envy and want? What does it say about forgiveness?
13. What history shapes the Macmillan family?
14. What are the intergenerational conflicts? Why do they matter? Do generations have a way of haunting one another?
15. Discuss some of the themes in this novel—quilts, light, turning, running, candles, hearts. How does each inform the story?
16. Why do you think the author wrote in multiple points-of-view?
17. What role do pets play in this novel?
18. Describe the ways in which the characters clean house. Why do these cleanings matter?
19. What do you think will happen next for this family? Will sisters in this family get along in the future?
20. In a movie, who would play the roles of these characters?