

The In-Between Hour

by Barbara Claypole White

Reader and Discussion Questions

1. A label of mental illness still carries a stigma in our society. Will has spent his life running from this shadow, and it has made him intensely private. Does your family have any experience of mental illness, and if so, have you struggled to find the balance between the public and the private? Do you think we have made any progress against the stigma?
2. How do you feel about Will's relationship with his mother? Do you think he should have accepted and made allowances for her behavior in the way that his father did, or do you think Will was right to call Jacob an enabler?
3. Will pretends Freddie is traveling in a moment of exhaustion and grief, but he makes a conscious decision to keep the story—and Freddie—alive. What do you think of Will's actions?
4. Do you believe grief manifests differently in everyone and that we all find unique ways of coping? Is Will merely trying to survive the unimaginable by leaning on the one thing he can control—storytelling?
5. Hannah believes that there is living, breathing history on Saponi Mountain. Will echoes that thought when he sees pictures of Hitler's anti-aircraft flak tower. Do you believe that places or buildings can retain an imprint of the past almost like a stored memory?
6. What do you think of Hannah's comment that family life is never about the picket fence and the dinner rolls but about surviving crises? What do you think of Will's comment that no one knows what happens once a family shuts the door and pulls the curtains?
7. What do you make of Hannah and Will's connection through Rosie? Do you believe in fate, or do you see their relationship as growing out of a chain of events orchestrated by Poppy and Jacob? What do you make of Will's comment that they fell in love because of, not despite, their respective family dramas?
8. The North Carolina forest is an important element of the story. How does the setting impact each character? Can you imagine the story working in a different setting?
9. The line between truth and lies blurs constantly in the novel. Do you agree that lying—or spinning a story—is sometimes necessary to protect loved ones? Why do you think Will and Cass worked so hard to keep Freddie's paternity secret? Do you think it was realistic to assume they could do so? Do you think Hannah was right to hide her father's suicide from her sons? What would you have done?
10. What do you think the future holds for Galen? Do you see him finding ways to cope with his depression?
11. In your opinion, what is the significance of the title, and how does it relate to each character's story?