

book club questions

THE VANISHING HALF

Do you believe Stella "vanished" from her true identity, as the title suggests? Why or why not?

Discuss Mallard as a significant setting in this novel. What do you make of its name, why did its citizens form it, and why did it cease to exist by the end of the book?

How were the other settings in The Vanishing Half (i.e., New Orleans, California, New York, Minneapolis) different from Mallard?

Stella and Desiree react differently to the post-traumatic stress of the death of their father. How do you think you and your family may have reacted?

Discuss "running away" as a theme in The Vanishing Half, which several characters did: Desiree, Stella, Kennedy, Jude, Reese.

Discuss "acting" as a theme in The Vanishing Half. For example, do you believe her mother's history influenced Kennedy to become an actress? Was Reese acting? What about Barry? What parts of your life feel like acting?

Why do you believe Bennett included Reese, a transgendered character, as such a major role in this book?

Discuss Stella's relations with Loretta and the role of Loretta's family in The Vanishing Half.

Do you think Early was capable of finding Stella?

Discuss "exposure" as a theme in The Vanishing Half. For example, both Stella and Reese often fear exposure, and Reese is a photographer exposing the film to the light. What do you make of this?

Discuss "education" as a theme in The Vanishing Half -- both the characters' access to it and their choices surrounding it.

Both twin sisters have daughters. Describe their daughters' similarities and differences and what influenced each of their characters.

Why do you think Jude continues to seek out Kennedy over decades of time?

Discuss the character of Adele and her role in the lives of the other characters. What was her legacy?

What role does identity play in the romantic relationships in The Vanishing Half?

Do you believe Stella will ever reveal her identity to her husband? If so, how will he react?

What do you think is next for these characters, especially Desiree, as she sets forth on a new journey?

Is identity intrinsic, created, or a bit of both?

Which characters do you believe were happy in their own skin at the end of the novel?

Are you happy in your skin? Identify one thing about your background that makes you feel proud and one way you can improve your self-identity.