

What are some of Greene's conflicts with her mother? Do their clashes resonate with you, feel familiar?

What is the source of Greene's mother's unhappiness? Do you think it's due mainly to the time and place, the 1950s suburbs? Does this make you think about your own issues, or your parents', as related to the times you live in?

To what extent do the mother-daughter conflicts get worked out in the course of the memoir?

At her mother's memorial, a friend reads the line from Alice Walker's essay, "Our Mothers' Gardens": "In me the meaning of your life is still unfolding." Do you see this "unfolding" happening in the memoir? Are there affinities between mother and daughter, ways in which the daughter's life has been enabled by the mother?

The lyrics that haunt Greene as she packs up her mother's house and puts it up for sale, *don't know what you've got till it's gone, they paved paradise, put up a parking lot*, are from Joni Mitchell's "The Yellow Taxi." How are these lines relevant to Greene's story? Do they resonate with your own experience?

Greene suggests parallels between losing her family and losing a place, "the valley of heart's delight" turned to Silicon Valley. Are there ways in which these losses parallel or augment each other?

She calls her story and her family's "a California story"? Does it feel uniquely Californian to you, or do you think such a story might it take place anywhere?

Greene has been a teacher for many years, but toward the end of the book, she begins to look at her teaching and her students differently. In what ways do her feelings about her teaching and her students change? What has brought about this change?

The memoir is laced with literary allusions, which is appropriate since Greene has been an English prof all her adult life. How did these affect your reading of the memoir?

The men in the story, Bob, her brother Bill, and her father, are not as fully present as her mother and aunt. Do you think this is deliberate? If so, why?

*“Deal with it?”* Greene writes of her brother’s suicide. “I don’t even know what that might mean.” Why does she say this? Based on any experience you might have had with suicide, does that statement ring true?

In the last chapter, Greene describes the memoir as “writing for those of us who need a second chance.” In what sense might writing be seen as “a second chance”?

Toward the end, Greene is beginning to sense a “universe radiant with meaning, a sacramental universe, sacramentalized by me.” She feels surprised by her spiritual longings—why surprised? Are there ways spirituality finds expression in this book?