

## Discussion Questions

Louise can be cunning and manipulative. To what extent is she a product of her time and circumstances? To what extent is she simply self-serving?

What is the significance of Louise's fluttering eyelids?

Louise blames herself and Doc for Marie's blindness. Who or what else might be at fault?

What did Louise learn about herself from the night spent caring for victims of The Twister? How did it influence her later on?

Why does Louise risk her hard-earned reputation to champion the babies' sore eyes cause? What price does she pay for her role? What does she gain from her role?

Louise and Dovie's friendship seems rock solid. What drives them apart?

Louise's childhood nemesis, Daisy, greets Louise like a long lost friend. Why does Louise so quickly trust that Daisy has changed?

What do you think of Louise's approach vs. Frank's when it comes to preparing Marie to succeed in a sighted world?

At the Chautauqua supper party, what was it about Giovanna's presence and guests' praise of Louise's peach melba, that awakened Louise to a lost part of herself?

Doc says it was because he was a doctor that he didn't think Louise would become infected. What does he mean?

What were the prejudices that impeded the babies' sore eyes movement and subsequent legislation? What else stood in the way?

What makes Frank ill-suited to innkeeping? Did he find his calling with the Whirlwind Maid & Marie's Chautauqua career?

Often what Louise fears doesn't materialize. When she fears that the child who leaves for the Chautauqua won't be the one who comes home, what is she anticipating?

What do you think Marie's prospects were had she lived?

Was Frank capable of killing Yonder?

Helen Keller's romance was sabotaged in large part because of a bias against people with handicaps marrying. Does this bias exist today?

How does Louise's understanding of her "compromise with sin" change over time? Does she ever come to grips with it? Can she forgive herself?

What are some erroneous beliefs Louise and others have regarding sex? What is the impact of these beliefs on her?

Betrayal is one of the themes of the novel. Which characters betray or are betrayed?  
What enables Louise to forgive her mother's betrayal?

Although Helen Keller is presented in a fictionalized friendship with Louise, the representation is true to her character. What surprises you most about her abilities and views?

When Bernard accuses Frank of giving Louise the "clap," Frank immediately suspects Yonder is Marie's father. What are the clues throughout the novel that cause him to jump to that conclusion?

How do you think Yonder feels about the assimilation movement and his role in it?

Why does Louise consider abandoning the campaign for drops?

Discuss any of these themes explored in the novel: shame and redemption, artifice vs. authenticity, friendship, and false pride.