

Earnest

Questions for Discussion

1. Are Earnest, Anna, and Jeff all earnest? Do you think they equally show sincere conviction and try to do the right thing? What stands in their way? How do they overcome it?
2. What part does time play in the story? Why is the present so important? And why does history matter? What influence does the past have on Anna, Jeff, and Earnest? How might it impact their future?
3. Does the house seem like a character in the story? Does it have a life of its own? Does it develop and change? How does the house remind you that the past, present, and future are all part of each other, as April Pringle says?
4. What lessons does the butterfly teach? How do they apply to Anna, Jeff, and Earnest?
5. As individuals, do Anna, Jeff, and Earnest handle hardship well? How does it make them grow?
6. Why is Gamble central to the story? Does the name have special meaning? Does the small town influence Anna and Jeff? Is the community important?
7. How do Anna and Jeff respond to the various holidays? Do their responses reveal their character?
8. Did you mind that Jeff signed up on NorthwestSingles.com? Is he right or wrong to want to date again? Are you glad when he gets thwarted? Why or why not?
9. Did you find yourself taking sides with Anna or Jeff? Did your sympathies change as the story unfolded? Did you feel they were equally to blame for the breakup, or was one more responsible than the other?
10. How did you feel about Mad Dog Horowitz, Lincoln Purcell, and the mediation? Did you think that Anna or Jeff should have gotten custody of Earnest, or should they have shared him?
11. What role do flowers play in the story – both in Plant Parenthood and in the house's garden? How is the New Dawn rose's name and history significant?
12. At the end of the story, are Jeff and Anna very different people than they were in the beginning? How have they changed? What specific factors brought about the change? Did Earnest change too?