

L O N E S T A R S

J U S T I N D E A B L E R

Discussion Questions

1. Throughout the book, Lacy confronts sexism in various settings: familial, educational, financial, religious. How do these dynamics affect her choices? How does Lacy discover a form of agency in a world of men (and women) who don't think of her as a protagonist?
2. At different times, characters in the book confront what it means to be able, or unable, to live where they are born. What kinds of migrations occur across the story? How do these experiences resonate with and vary from one another? What do the migrants leave behind, and what never leaves them about the places where they were born?
3. Late in his life, Aaron finds a sense of community with fellow veterans at the VA in Houston—a bond that resulted from an experience of war of which he had no choice. How did the trauma of Vietnam affect Aaron and the family he would go on to have?
4. Several of the characters in the book—Aaron, Lacy, Julian, Bonnie—struggle with the feeling of being alone. What does the story suggest about companionship, and how a person might find a lasting version of it? How much do time and context—e.g., two working mothers meeting in the 1980s—inform the companionship people are able to find?
5. Across different generations, characters in the book must decide whether to come out or remain closeted about who they are, whether it's their national origin, sexual orientation, or some other aspect of themselves. How do these dynamics of secrecy influence the characters and their choices?
6. Both Lacy and Aaron make the decision to cut themselves off from their families of origin, yet the imprint of those families appears to remain in each character. How do the dynamics of their families of origin shape their decisions as adults?
7. Throughout the book, Lacy and Aaron and Julian are writing—letters, notes, speeches—and discovering important things about themselves in the process. What is it about the space of writing that helps these characters learn about themselves? How are they otherwise constrained?
8. Many of the men in the book—Ernest, Aaron, Julian, Philip—confront what it means and requires to be a father. How do their approaches to fatherhood vary? How much are they shaped by the models that came before them?
9. Lacy and Aaron's marriage is one of many lows and indignities. After so many, what is it about Crystal that makes her the last straw for Lacy?
10. Both Lacy and Aaron, and Julian and Philip, commit quickly to each other as intimate partners. What prepares each of them to make such a rapid decision? How do their experiences of commitment differ? Does the book signal whether Julian and Philip's marriage will take a different path than Lacy and Aaron's did?
11. The book ends with an unconventional tableau of present and future family: Julian, Philip, Clayton, Tasha, Vanessa, a pregnant Marisol. What does the story suggest about how families come to be created? About what we inherit from our parents?



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