



### Commonwealth Discussion Questions

1. Patchett has called this her most autobiographical novel, saying, “Most of the things in this book didn’t actually happen, but the feelings are very close to home. Do the story’s events have the ring of authenticity to them? Why or why not?”
2. The kiss in the opening chapter sets in motion a series of events that has far-reaching consequences for two families. Do you believe, along with Bert, that the divorces and subsequent remarriages were inevitable?
3. How is each child affected by divorce and remarriage in the novel?
4. How does Patchett explore personal and professional boundaries through each of her characters’ choices?
5. Patchett is a novelist mining her own family history in order to write a novel about a novelist mining someone else’s family history to write a novel. (Whew! Did you follow that?) Does she pull it off?
6. This novel revolved around a story within the story. How did that affect your reading?
7. What is the meaning of the title?
8. What do the various literary allusions bring to the story?
9. Patchett has said, “The very last moment in the book is like a musical note.” Do you think her ending hits the right note? Why or why not?