

# **The Education of Dixie Dupree - Discussion Questions**

1. Early on we learn that Evie loves her children - yet she cannot control her temper and takes it out on Dixie, sometimes severely. Why cannot the mother see the harm she is doing? What does she gain from abusing Dixie?
2. Evie dreams of moving back to her hometown and is unhappy with her current circumstances. What role might this dissatisfaction play in her relationship with her children? Could it have influenced her husband's decision to end his life?
3. Why is Dixie's brother not as much of a target?
4. There are many forms of child abuse - physical, mental, sexual. Discuss child abuse in general and then specifically as it relates to Dixie. Is poverty a catalyst for any form of abuse? Does abuse stem from being mentally unstable, and if so, is that an excuse?
5. Dixie's attitude remains constant throughout the book - hopeful and optimistic even as her life unravels. She makes excuses for the behavior she witnesses and experiences. Is this common among abused children? Is it because she only knows the life she lives and does not know any different?
6. Many people in Dixie's life could have helped her - her father, grandparents, teachers - yet no one did. Why do you think this is? Should they have known there were problems? Evie in particular has a history with her brother, Dixie's uncle, and should have known better. What emotions does this abuse elicit in you?
7. Several times Dixie thinks about telling an adult. She ends up telling her brother, who does not believe her and has no real power to help. Why does she lie to adults about her situation instead of speaking up? What motivates her to keep quiet?
8. Why do you think Dixie's father took his own life? From Dixie's perspective, is this the same as abandonment?