

Fly Away Home — Discussion Questions

1. One of Lizzie's counselors in Minnesota suggests that she uses her camera as a distancing strategy, saying, "If you are taking pictures, it takes you out of the story . . . it turns you into an observer instead of a participant." Lizzie instead thinks that her camera offers her a role as the family historian. Which do you think is true, and why?
2. Both Diana and Richard are involved in extramarital affairs with people they meet at work. Did you judge them and their actions differently? If so, can you explain why?
3. The mother daughter relationship is central to *Fly Away Home*. Discuss how the female characters react against their mothers in their own life choices.
4. Flight and escape are recurrent themes in the novel. In contrast, HALT is the mantra Lizzie learns in rehab to help her address addictive behaviors. What do you think the author is saying about coping mechanisms? In which instances do these seem to be healthy and effective, and in which are they neither?
5. How are Lizzie and Diana shaped by their relationship with their father? What do their choices in men suggest? Compare and contrast Jeff, Doug, and Gary to Richard. How are they similar, and how are they different?
6. The concept of working mothers is fraught in this novel. Selma and Diana work in demanding professions that have traditionally been male dominated, and while Sylvie is not traditionally employed, she admits that she took care of Richard, and it was a job that left little room for taking care of anything else . . . sometimes not even her daughters. How important is a career to how each of these women defines herself?
7. When Sylvie tells Tim about the incident between Lizzie and Kendall, she says that she and Richard had chosen incorrectly. Do you agree? Putting yourself in Sylvie's shoes, what would you have done?
8. Diana says that she had arranged her own marriage with Gary, but that perhaps passion, chemistry, attraction, whatever you wanted to call it, was like frosting that could be smoothed over the cracks of a badly baked cake. What do you think about this statement?
9. Sylvie is preoccupied by how the media and public view political wives who stand by their men. Did reading *Fly Away Home* change the way you think about women like Elizabeth Edwards, Jenny Sanford, Silda Spitzer, or Hillary Clinton?
10. We see Sylvie, Diana, and Lizzie both as daughters and as mothers. Did you see their personalities shift in each role? If so, how?

11. Richard tells a young Diana that sometimes serving the big P people meant he was less available for the little P people that he loved. Do you think that in a job as high powered as Richard's, family relationships inevitably suffer?

12. Lizzie and Diana each define themselves in relation to the other - as each other's opposites. In what ways is this true? In what ways are they similar?

13. Selma asks Sylvie, "Would Richard be happy with a different kind of marriage? A different kind of wife?" Based on what you saw of the Woodruffs' marriage, what do you think? What do you envision happening between Richard and Sylvie?