

The God of Animals – Discussion Questions

1. Aryn Kyle tells the story through Alice, a twelve-year-old girl. How does this perspective shape the novel? Does Alice's youth make her observations clearer or more limited?
2. What is the significance of the title? Who or what is the God of animals, and what do the characters' relationships with horses reveal about power and control?
3. As secrets are withheld from Alice, what does she learn about her family and herself? Which revelations were most striking?
4. Why does Alice invent a friendship with her dead classmate, Polly Cain? What conclusions does she reach about Polly's death?
5. How does Marian Winston's withdrawal affect the family? Do you see her behavior as illness, avoidance, or something else?
6. Joe Winston remains hopeful despite repeated failures. How would you describe him, and what does Alice see that he cannot?
7. What draws Alice to Mr. Delmar? What is the price she anticipates paying, and does the relationship help or harm her?
8. Why does Patty Jo distance herself from the Catfish? How does her relationship with Joe both help and hurt them?
9. Alice's ride on Darling is a moment of connection. What does she discover in that moment, and why can she not replicate it later?
10. Patty Jo says that marriage is the most expensive ticket to nowhere. Does this hold true for the other marriages in the novel?
11. How might the characters approach modern ethical issues such as genetic engineering or reproductive technologies?
12. What does Alice observe about wealth and class as the summer unfolds?
13. Discuss the role of violence and cruelty in the novel. How does Alice process what she witnesses?
14. Horses appear in many pivotal scenes. Which moments stood out to you, and why?
15. How does Kyle use seasons and setting to mirror emotional shifts in the story?

16. Do you consider *The God of Animals* a coming-of-age novel? Which moment most clearly marks Alice's loss of innocence?