

Southfield Public Library

Weird Sisters by Eleanor Brown

Discussion questions used at SPL June 10 & 11, 2014

1. The story is told in a collective voice of all the sisters (1st person “we”), did you find this to be hard to follow? Was it difficult to read?
2. When you first saw the title, *The Weird Sisters*, what did you think the book would be about? What do you think the title really means?
3. According to the sisters the title *The Weird Sisters* is taken from the Shakespearean play, *Macbeth* referring to “the three witches”, do you think the sisters of this novel resemble the three witches from *Macbeth*? The three witches are considered “agents of fate”, they foretell the future. The Old English word “wyrð” or “weird” means “Fate,” which is the origin of the witches. They are the Fates from classic mythology.
4. Do you believe in Birth Order characteristics? It is believed that the youngest child is spoiled or the first born is usually responsible but the middle child always seeks attention from parents. How does birth order play in the personality of Bean, Cordy, and Rose?
5. Is this story more about sisters’ relationships or parent child relationships? The dynamics are different. How does each relationship play out when it comes to the life decisions each character makes?
6. If you have sisters or grew-up in a family with siblings, how does this family’s dynamics compare to yours? Do you see similarities, differences or both? In what ways, give an example that you can share that relates to the book?
7. There has always been talk about siblings’ influence of the personality of their other siblings, in what ways does Rose influence the personality of her sisters? How do Bean & Cordy influence each other and/or Rose?
8. The mother is not given a name in this book; do you feel that the mother’s voice is silent? Is this more a story about fathers and daughters than mothers and daughters? The girls seem more affected by their father than their mother. Do you know why?
9. Each sister was given a name of a female character from a William Shakespeare play, Rose (Rosalind, *As You Like It*), Bean (Bianca, *Othello*), and Cordy (Cordelia, *King Lear*). What do you know about any of the characters? Which sister most embodies her namesake?
10. Of the three sisters, which do you like the most? Why? Which do you like the least and why?

11. What did you think when the sisters stated “we love each other, but don’t necessarily like each other”? Is this a normal feeling among families with kids? Can you relate to this sentiment?

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General discussion questions

- For the person who chose the book – What made you want to read it? What made you pick it for the book club? Did it live up to your expectations?
- How is the book structured? First person? Third person? Flashbacks? Narrative devices? Do you think the author did a good job with it?
- How would you describe the author’s writing style? Concise? Flowery? How is language used in this book? Read aloud a passage that really struck you. How does that passage relate to the book as a whole?
- How effective is the author’s use of plot twists? Were you able to predict certain things before they happened? Did the author keep you guessing until the end?
- Did the book hold your interest?
- How important is the setting to the story? Did you feel like you were somewhere else? Did the time setting make a difference in the story? Did the author provide enough background information for you to understand the setting and time placement?
- Which is stronger in the book – the characters or the plots?
- Would you recommend this book to someone else? Why? And to whom?

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Title *Weird Sisters by Eleanor Brown*

Discussion questions taken from a website LitLovers

website address <http://www.litlovers.com/reading-guides/13-fiction/8087-weird-sisters-brown?start=3>

Discussion Questions

- 1.The Andreas family is dedicated to books, particularly Shakespeare. Would the family be different if their father were an expert on a different writer? Edgar Allan Poe, let's say, or Mark Twain? What if they were a family of musicians or athletes, rather than readers? How might that change their dynamic? Is there an interest that unites your family in the same way that reading unites the Andreas family?
- 2.The narration is omniscient first person plural ("we" rather than "I"). Why do you think the author chose to write the novel in this way? Did you like it?
- 3.Which sister is your favorite? Why? Which sister do you most identify with? Are they the same character?
- 4.Do you have any siblings? If so, in what way is your relationship with them similar to the relationship among the Andreas sisters? In what way is it different?
- 5.Each of the sisters has a feeling of failure about where she is in her life and an uncertainty about her position as a grown-up. Are there certain markers that make you an adult, and if so, what are they?
- 6.In what ways are the sisters' problems of their own making? Does this make them more or less sympathetic?
- 7.The narrator says that God was always there if the family needed him, "kind of like an extra tube of toothpaste under the sink." Is that true, or does the family's religion have a larger effect on the sisters than they claim? How does your own family's faith, or lack thereof, influence you?
- 8.In many ways, the Andreas sisters' personalities align with proposed birth-order roles: Rose, the driven caregiver; Bean, the rebellious pragmatist; and Cordy, the free-spirited performer. How important do you think birth order is? Do you see those traits in your own family or in people you know?
- 9.Father Aidan tells Bean, "Your story, Bean, is the story of your sisters. And it is past time, I think, for you to stop telling that particular story, and tell the story of yourself. Stop defining yourself in terms of them. You don't just have to exist in the empty spaces they leave." Do you agree with Father Aidan? Is it possible to identify one's self not in relationship to one's siblings or family?
- 10.Is it irresponsible of Cordy to keep her baby?
- 11.How does the Andreas family deal with the mother's illness? How would your family have coped differently?

12. The sisters say that "We have always wondered why there is not more research done on the children of happy marriages." How does their parents' love story affect the sisters? How did your own parents' relationship affect you?

13. What do you think of the sisters' father, James? Is he a good parent? What about their mother?

14. Why do you think the mother is never given a name?

15. The narrators' mother admits that she ended up with the girls' father because she was scared to venture out into the world. Yet she doesn't seem to have any regrets. Do you think there are people who are just not meant to leave home or their comfort zone?

16. Bean and Cordy initially want to leave Barnwell behind, yet they remain, while Rose is the one off living in Europe. Do you think people sometimes become constrained by childhood perceptions of themselves and how their lives will be? How is your own life different from the way you thought it would turn out?

17. When you first saw the title, *The Weird Sisters*, what did you think the book would be about? What do you think the title really means?