

Mother's A novel of hoarding friending and mischief - Book Club Questions

1. People live parallel but different lives, even in the same house. Memories of childhood events may be entirely opposite. How is this true of Lunie and Dayton? Give examples. What role does their mother play in their memories of her and growing up in her house?
2. What options did Lunie have to solve her problems other than Dr. Manngo? Why or why not did his counsel appeal to her?
3. Dayton also sought counsel from Dr. Manngo. Why or why not was Dr. Manngo helpful to him?
4. Therapists have been known to say, "All roads lead to mother." Would Dayton or Lunie's better understanding of their relationship with Mother help them to change? How did their early childhood contribute to his hoarding and her cleanliness fixations, and Dayton's defensiveness of Mother?
5. In Lunie's book, Sue is her alter ego. How does her development of Sue's character lead to Lunie's decisions in the final pages of the book?
6. Why are Rhoda and Dayton attracted to each other? What elements of Rhoda's character most bother Lunie?
7. Wilma, Dolce's friend, seems to want to help Lunie (p. 102), but is concerned about the fence. Does Wilma have ulterior motives? Is it a surprise that Wilma participates in Coreen's cooking show? Why is she a problem at the yard sale?
8. Dayton accuses Lunie of making assumptions about his friends during the planning of the party and the party itself. Is Dayton prone to making assumptions? Give examples.
9. Clive Turkel and Agnes say they are caretakers of Mother's house in the evenings. Why does this appeal to each of them? What are their ulterior motives? What happens when Lunie changes the locks? Did you think her plan would work?
10. Dayton is writing his autobiography as told by Rhoda. He says his life is "an empty book." Would you agree?
11. When Dolce first divorced she had no things. Wilma Wolenski asks when the moving truck is arriving and Dolce says there will not be one. Is this situation enough to make a person a hoarder? Is hoarding a genetic disorder or does it come from some sort of life situation?
12. Why did Dayton steal the teacup greyhound, Scooter? How does this act fit with his personality?
13. On numerous occasions why does Rhoda pretend to be Lunie?
14. Agnes, the cleaning service lady, takes Cleebo, the broken giraffe toy belonging to Dayton when he was a child. She exchanges it for an Egyptian artifact from the Pomphreys' house, another family for whom she cleans. How does Dayton react? What happens as a result?
15. Owning and borrowing: Which characters have the most difficulty with boundaries—that is, what belongs to whom? Discuss the ramifications of Rhoda taking Lunie's computer, Dayton borrowing Lunie's car, etc. When is it okay to borrow? When is it appropriate to not share? What other intrusions

have you observed?

16. What is "The Smell"? What is "The Taste"? Have you experienced either?

17. In the second section of the book we hear Dayton's concerns about Lunie's "hostility" toward him and his idea of a cruise for Lunie. Are you convinced his is as clueless and kind as he seems?

18. What does Dayton's take on hitchhikers tell us about his thought process? (p.205)

19. How did Dayton hear about his mother's death? What did Belle have as an explanation for Lunie's behavior at that time? Do you think her explanation fit the situation?

20. How does Coreen know about the dog Scooter? Why did Agnes blab about the dog?

21. Dayton, Lunie, and Coreen grew up in the same neighborhood and attended school together. What history, memories, baggage do the three of them have from the early years? Do you think the adult versions of Dayton and Lunie are as much of a surprise to Coreen as she is to them?

22. Have you attended a class reunion to discover classmates who, as adults, are nothing like you would have expected?

23. Does Lunie really bear any responsibility for her mother's death? Why does she think it is her fault?

24. Mother's is full of modern-day references to Facebook, cooking chef shows, texting, on line counseling, the "rage" for child abuse accusations. Is the story of hoarding and family dysfunction painted here age-old or a contemporary tale?

25. While the author savors the humor of each situation, hoarding and family dysfunction are serious problems. In what way does humor help us to look at ourselves and at some of the more serious issues people face today?

26. We are all some place on the spectrum of neatnik or hoarder. As exaggerated and outrageous as this tale is, where do you fit in? Do you have Christmas cards saved for the last twenty years or a collection of boxes ready for mailing gifts? Is it hard to part with sentimental items that have no use?