

Discussion Questions

Faye, Faraway by Helen Fisher

1. How does losing her mother at such a young age define Faye? Do you think this loss has affected how she is raising her own girls or influenced her decision to marry Eddie?
2. Faye works at the Royal National Institute for the Blind, where she interacts with people who perceive the world differently than she does. Do you think her job affected the way she understood her trip to the past? Did it make her a good or bad candidate for the trip?
3. How does the author introduce the concept of time travel? Do you think she did so in a believable way, or were you skeptical of the Space Hopper box from the start?
4. Was Faye right to keep her real identity from Jeanie when they were reunited? What do you think would have happened if she told her mother who she really was? If you were Jeanie, would you have wanted to know, and if you were Faye, would you have told her the truth?
5. On page 56, Jeanie tells Faye, "You can only know your parents as parents, you can't know them as anything else." When Faye learns that her mother is a pot smoker, she realizes that she is "hostage to the same illusions my own children had of me." Do you agree with Jeanie's statement? Think of your own parents. Are you held to the same illusions Faye is?
6. Do you think Faye should have gone back to visit her mother the second time, considering she knew what she stood to lose? Were there things she should have tried to change? Were you sympathetic to her single-minded determination to see her mother again, or were you upset that she would risk putting her girls in the same situation she'd endured while growing up? How much do you think her decision was influenced by her faith that Eddie would be enough for their children? Did she ultimately choose her mother over her daughters? What would you have done in her position?
7. As Jeanie and Faye sit together, drinking, smoking, and talking, what do they learn about each other that they might not have learned if they'd had a typical mother-daughter relationship? Do you think their relationship will be stronger because of their ability to get to know each other as equals rather than as parent and child? How important is this as their relationship grows throughout the book and beyond?
8. What do you think of Em and Henry's decision to keep from young Faye their theories and the town gossip about Jeanie's disappearance? Do you think it was ultimately more harmful or helpful to Faye as she grew up and processed her mother's death? What would you have done if you were them?
9. Both Elizabeth and Louis caution Faye against time traveling for the third time, but Faye is upset by their advice. Do you think her anger at them is justified? Do you think anyone is acting selfishly in these conversations? If so, did that affect how you viewed any of them?

10. Faye ignores the very advice she gives to her daughters in a letter she writes to them: “Don’t dwell too much on the past.” Why do you think she offers this advice? Reread her letter to the girls on pages 250 to 252. Do you think Faye is telling them what she hoped her mother might have told her? Do you think she is spending too much time living in the past instead of the present? How and when can any of us really let go of the past? Should we?

11. Lying for protection—of oneself or of others—is a common theme in *Faye, Faraway*. Discuss the many lies, both big and small, that are told throughout the book. What or who are these characters trying to protect, and do you think they succeed? What are the intended and unintended consequences of the lies they tell?

12. On page 268, Faye realizes that she can measure Eddie’s love for her by the strength of his fear of losing her. Do you find this to be true in your relationships? Do you think the power of love for someone can only be fully felt once the threat of losing that person arises or once that person is lost? Is it true that we don’t know what we have until it’s gone?

13. On page 283, Eddie poses several questions to Faye as he tries to get her to let go of the Space Hopper box: Would the box’s magic work on Evie and Esther? Would they survive the journey or get into trouble without Faye there to help them? Would they find their way back? If Faye were to travel through time again and the box was destroyed at the other end, where would she end up? Discuss your answers to these questions with your group based on the information the author has given about this form of time travel.

14. Both Eddie and Louis know that their worlds are far larger than what they can feel or see. What characteristics do they possess that enable them to believe in Faye despite the seemingly crazy story she tells them? Do you think Cassie, Clem, or Uncle Henry would have reacted similarly? Why or why not?

15. Faith and its relation to a world beyond what one sees every day is a common theme in the novel. Eddie has faith in God, Jeanie and Elizabeth have faith in Faye, and Faye has faith in her ability to time travel. Discuss what faith and God mean to the different characters in the book and how they see these higher powers differently. Are their gods different from each other, or are they all believing in the same higher power but just giving it a different name?

16. The ending of the novel is foreshadowed a few times throughout the book. While reading, did you suspect that it would end the way it does? Did that affect your enjoyment of the novel? Were you satisfied by the ending?

(Questions from Gallery Books Reading Guide)