

Purple Trees and a Will to Believe: Comprehension Questions

Chapters 1-4

Chapter 1

1. When Sybille cries at her mother's funeral, she feels as though it will be the last moment that she will ever have alone, or to herself. Why does she feel this way?
2. How does Sybille's friend Kelly Ann try and cheer her up and how does she react?
3. How are boys different from girls through Sybille's eyes?
4. When the doctors officially pronounced Mom dead, what does Sybille find weird?
5. Why wasn't Mom buried in California?
6. How does Sybille feel about alcohol?
7. What does the name Sybille mean, and why is its meaning ironic?
8. What does the name Sander mean, and why is its meaning ironic?
9. What does the name Solomon mean, and why is its meaning ironic?
10. What keeps Grandma from taking action to protect Sybille, Sander, and Solomon from their father's abuse?
11. What does Mom offer as one contributing factor to why Dad is abusive?
12. What did Mom do for a living?

13. Why can't Sybille accept God?
14. What is it about Dad's porcelain veneers at the memorial service that make him appear on the outside, to be a friendly, nice guy?
15. Why doesn't Mom question Dad's win at the casino?

Chapter 2

1. What is Dad's relationship with Lula Belle, the cat?
2. Why doesn't Sybille wish Dad would go to Hell?
3. What does Dad's incident with changing the lightbulb say about his personality?
4. What is Sybille still waiting for?
5. Why did everyone at Mom's church gravitate toward her?

Chapter 3

1. Describe Dad's personality in dealing with others.
2. It is intimated that the garage is where many of the beatings take place. What does Solomon returning from the garage licking a popsicle represent?
3. What is one potential reason Sybille offers for why Dad is against putting Solomon on ADHD medicine?
4. According to Nenek, what did Mom see in Dad?

5. If you have a bad example set for you, do you think you have to follow in that person's footsteps? Why or why not?
6. If Sybille doesn't believe in God, where does she think a child comes from?
7. In chapter 3, when does Sybille say she will reevaluate her belief system?

Chapter 4

1. What type of scars take the longest to heal?
2. What word does Sybille use to describe how she felt around her mother?
3. Why does Sybille refer to the church as 'Mom's church'?
4. What is one reason Sybille doesn't care much for God?
5. Who does Sybille believe is one of God's favorites and why?
6. What physical insecurity does Sybille have?
7. Describe Dad's behavior at Reverend Guldehen's house.
8. According to Sybille, why wouldn't the single women at Reverend Guldehen's house want Dad?
9. What was the last memory Sybille has of a "happy family?"
10. What "changed" Dad?
11. Why does Sybille think she has been TOO honest when in the presence of her peers?
12. If Sybille were religious, what does she say she would pray about?
13. What 'bugs' Sybille about religion?
14. What does Sybille think about explosions?
15. How does Sybille Describe herself?

