

# Purple Trees and a Will to Believe: Comprehension Questions

## Chapters 9-13

### Chapter 9

1. **God doesn't intervene with \_\_\_\_\_.**

God doesn't intervene with free will.

2. **What emotion is Nenek feeling when she arrives with Grandma to pick up Sybille and her brothers? Why does she feel this way?**

Nenek is overwhelmed with guilt for having not protected Sybille and her brothers from their father's abuse.

3. **What does Sybille want in place of an apology from Grandma and Nenek?**

In place of an apology from Grandma and Nenek, Sybille wants to be released from the hospital and sleep in a warm bed, in a room that doesn't smell of iodine and alcohol.

4. **How does Sybille feel about pierced ears after her stay in the hospital?**

While previously excited about the thought of having pierced ears someday, Sybille now feels afraid because the hospital is filled with needles, cotton swabs, alcohol, and iodine, all things that she imagines are found in tattoo parlors. After having an unpleasant experience with getting blood drawn in the hospital, she becomes fearful of experiencing the pain of yet another needle, something that would enter the picture if she were to have her ears pierced.

**5. How does Sybille feel about having her blood drawn? How does she help Solomon get over his fear when Nurse Patty comes in to draw HIS blood?**

Sybille is not fond of the idea and is clearly nervous and uneasy. After reluctantly agreeing to go ahead of her brother Solomon, she finds courage within to help him when it is HIS turn. She uses distraction by talking to him about how great it will be when the three of them are released from the hospital. Nurse patty sticks the needle in his arm while Sybille is talking, and the experience is over fast.

## **Chapter 10**

**1. Where is Sybille's favorite spot to write poetry?**

Sybille enjoys writing poetry under the leaves of a purple jacaranda tree which sits just outside Grandma's bedroom window.

**2. How does Sybille describe nature?**

Sybille describes nature as peaceful, especially in spring. Everything is blooming and there are so many bright colors. There's always a breeze, but there's warmth in the wind as it touches your cheeks like a feather falling from the sky. She says that the feature tickles as it falls from the sky, making her laugh.

**3. What does Sybille think of the mass shooting that was shown on TV?**

Sybille is thankful that it wasn't her father who committed the heinous crime. She is thankful that he is in the hands of law enforcement, so he is unable to hurt anyone else.

**4. What does Sybille ask God for?**

Sybille asks God to make life fair.

**5. Why was it hard for Sybille to feel sad when she walked in the house?**

It was hard for Sybille to feel sad when she walked in the house because there was comfort food on the stovetop. The smell wafts into the living room and puts her in a state of calm serenity.

**6. What does Sybille check off her wish list?**

Sybille checks safety off her wish list.

**7. What does Sybille re-think? Why?**

Sybille re-thinks the one-week free trial of God because she still has some things she needs to discuss with him. She wants to extend the trial for an extra week or even abandon the 'trial' business altogether.

**8. What promise does Sybille make to God in exchange for Him helping her sort through 'big feelings?'**

Sybille makes a promise to be nicer to her brothers Sander and Solomon.

## **Chapter 11**

**1. Did Dad plead guilty or not guilty to the child abuse charges against him? How does Sybille feel after hearing what Dad had to say to the charges against him?**

Dad pleaded not guilty to the child abuse charges against him. Sybille is not surprised at all.

**2. When is Sybille allowed to return to school?**

Sybille is allowed to return to school after completing two remote, therapy sessions with a licensed psychologist.

**3. How does Kelly Ann react to hearing about the abuse?**

Kelly Ann is puzzled that Sybille hadn't said anything about the abuse. She reassures Sybille that she can tell her anything, saying she will always be there for her.

**4. Who flies down from Texas, Vermont, and Maine?**

Sybille's aunts Molly, Melinda, and Mandy fly down from Texas, Vermont, and Maine.

**5. What does Sybille want to be when she grows up?**

Sybille wants to be a famous author or poet when she grows up.

**6. What does Sybille want planted in her backyard when she owns her own house someday?**

Sybille wants to plant purple jacaranda trees in her backyard.

**7. How many kids does Sybille want to have when she grows up?**

Sybille wants to have six kids — mostly girls.

**8. What continues to 'creep' Sybille out?**

Big smiles continue to creep Sybille out.

**9. Who does Sybille think has her best interest at heart?**

Sybille thinks God has her best interest at heart.

**10. What religion does Sybille now identify with?**

Sybille now identifies with Christianity.

**11. What does Sybille get when she goes shopping at the mall with Grandma and Nenek?**

When Sybille goes shopping at the mall with Grandma and Nenek, she gets a new dress to wear on Easter Sunday.

**12. Do you think it matters more who you are on the INSIDE or the OUTSIDE? Why?**

Open-ended responses.

## **Chapter 12**

**1. What do you think is so powerful about Sybille's letter to Dad?**

Open-ended responses.

**2. How does Sybille end her letter to Dad? If you were in Sybille's shoes, how would YOU have ended a letter to Dad?**

Sybille ends her letter saying, "I love you."

**3. What was the verdict published by the clerk?**

A guilty verdict was published by the clerk.

**4. Dad was sentenced to \_\_\_\_\_.**

Dad was sentenced to three years in state prison, mandatory drug and alcohol rehabilitation and finally, six years of court supervised visits with Sybille, Sander, and Solomon AFTER his release from prison.

**5. How did Dad appear when he was taken away in handcuffs?**

Dad was expressionless. He was a lost soul, void of compassion while he was led away in handcuffs.

**6. What is Sybille's first impression of Taylor, the professional body piercer who works at the tattoo parlor in town?**

She is smitten with him and immediately finds him attractive. He has blue eyes and shoulder-length blonde hair.

**7. How is Sybille feeling about getting her ears pierced? Why do you think she feels this way?**

Sybille is very nervous. After suffering abuse at the hands of her father and spending a week in the hospital where she had to have her blood drawn with a needle, she is most likely afraid that the piercing procedure will be painful.

**8. How does the music spinning in the background at the tattoo parlor help set the "cool" vibe, as described by Sybille herself?**

The music played is from a popular independent rock band. Sybille immediately feels as though she is a part of the "cool" crowd. Rock music is edgy — the tone of the electric guitars and loud drums present in rock music match the edginess of having a piercing or tattoo. Piercings and tattoos are often viewed as edgy because they represent making a choice for yourself and marking your body with something that is personal and meaningful to YOU.

**9. How does Taylor's bedside manner help put Sybille at ease and calm her nerves?**

Taylor is kind and empathetic, walking Sybille through each step of the piercing procedure. He shows her that just because something may hurt a little, it doesn't have to make the experience negative. He shows that the experience can still be fun and exciting, even if there is some discomfort involved. He also makes Sybille feel more confident in her own skin by giving her his full, undivided attention. He is not turned off by her 'muddy brown eyes' or the tiny bit of baby fat that she is still trying to shed. He accepts her for who she is in that moment and doesn't fault her for feeling insecure or nervous about the pain.

**10. What is unique about Sybille getting her ears pierced in comparison with Dad's beatings or Nurse Patty drawing blood at the hospital?**

What is particularly unique about Sybille getting her ears pierced in comparison with Dad's beatings or Nurse Patty drawing blood at the hospital is that she has CHOSEN to have pierced ears. The procedure marks the first time in Sybille's life where she is in control and able to make decisions for herself.

## **Chapter 13**

**1. Who does Sybille say has given her the best guidance of all?**

Sybille says God has given her the best guidance of all.

**2. How does Sybille describe herself?**

Sybille describes herself as stubborn, admitting that it was her own stubbornness that caused her time 'coming around to God.'

**3. Who is God to Sybille? What role does he play in her life?**

God is another best friend to Sybille who she can confide in.

**4. What happened to Grandma and Nenek's properties?**

Grandma and Nenek sold their properties and moved in with Sybille and her brothers in their house on Abbey Road.

**5. What advice does Grandma give Sybille regarding visiting Dad in prison?**

Grandma advises Sybille to follow her heart, do what feels right, and take life one day at a time.

**6. When does Sybille say she will reevaluate visiting Dad in prison?**

Sybille says she will reevaluate visiting Dad in prison when pigs fly.