

Over the Mountain

Study Questions

1. With which of the Oechsner family members do you identify most? Do any of them remind you of your own family members? Why?
2. In what ways did you relate to Harriet's experience of feeling like an outsider as a new student at Shades Creek High School? Did any of Harriet's teachers remind you of teachers you had in high school?
3. When Squeaky locked the door to the fallout shelter, Harriet shuddered to think what it would be like in the midst of a real nuclear attack to be stranded outside the door, or even worse, to be inside listening to the cries of someone banging to get in. Which do you think would be worse? If you were inside, could you make the decision not to let anyone else in?
4. During Fritz and Frankie's visit, the Oechsner family confronted the issue of mixed-faith marriage. How do you feel about the way the issue was resolved? What did Pauline mean when said, "I wish Fritz and Frankie's religious differences boiled down to simple things like whether to drink grape juice or wine, or the matter of how the symbols in the church are arranged...But I'm afraid their differences are a lot more fundamental"?
5. Lulu told Grandmother Louisa that adults always tell kids that things are complicated when they don't want to explain them. Was she right? Do you agree with the way Grandmother Louisa responded? In the case of Junior's suicide, do you agree with Pauline and Erik's decision to answer Harriet's questions honestly because they thought "the half-truths and opinions I'd hear might be more troubling than the raw truth"?
6. How do you relate to Harriet's cheerleading experience? Do you respond to disappointment by keeping it all inside?
7. What did you think about Mr. Norton's behavior toward Harriet at the dinner table? Should she have reported it to her parents? Would this scene have played out differently if it had been set in current times? (Me too movement?).
8. A prominent theme of the book is racial injustice. Would that theme play out differently if the book had been written about the present?