

The Sweet Tea Odyssey
By: Catherine Mann
Discussion Questions

1. Were you surprised to learn that the Americans with Disabilities Act (ada.gov) wasn't passed until 1990? What did you think of Lillian's and Rosalynn's journeys to support the legislation?
2. *The Sweet Tea Odyssey* is a road trip story, but the characters are all on different journeys in different timelines. What are the three main characters pursuing in the present-day story?
3. Elsie is the victim of two cruel schemes—one at the hands of a former romantic interest, and one because of someone she thought was a friend. Was her predicament believable? What are ways to keep teens safe from similar threats online?
4. Rosalynn's life changed radically as a child. How was her relationship with her grandmother strengthened afterward?
5. Similarly, Elsie chose to reach out to her grandmother when in crisis. What made her seek help from Grammie over her mother?
6. The author makes frequent references to sweet tea and how it should be prepared. What does sweet tea represent, particularly as it relates to adding sugar?
7. Why do you think the author chose to tell Lillian's scenes through first-person point of view? How might the story have been different if told via first person in Rosalynn's or Elsie's point of view?
8. Which character did you relate to the most and why? What are some actions you might take to help those with disabilities live in a more accommodating world? What lessons or insights did you gain from this novel about issues with access?
9. Elsie thinks: "Why couldn't people understand? Just because a dog knew some tricks or provided emotional support, that did not make him a service dog." What elements of service dog training and tasks surprised you? (For more information on service dog standards, laws, and general questions, consider visiting the website for Assistance Dogs International: AssistanceDogsInternational.org.)
10. What are the similarities and differences in Grady and Seth that drove them both toward addiction but allowed only Grady to seek recovery?
11. How did the addictions discussed in the book affect the characters' relationships?
12. Each of the main characters experiences trauma—Rosalynn and Lillian from the accident, Elsie from her friends' betrayal, Grady from both work and Rosalynn's accident. How does each character respond to stress and trauma?
13. What role do secrets play throughout the book?
14. What lessons did you learn about family and togetherness from this story?
15. Where do you think Elsie ends up in fifteen years?
16. Do you believe Ben Nguyen and Rosalynn will form a lasting relationship? If so, how will the road trip have taught her how to have a more balanced partnership?
17. Della, Lillian, Rosalynn, and Elsie all mention their superstitious natures. In what ways are you superstitious? How can those superstitions become self-fulfilling prophecies?
18. Lillian ponders the following: "I'd done a poor job passing on the stories of our generations of women, something I needed to rectify. We deserved to be remembered for our resilience, our gift to one another as ingrained as our bright green eyes." How have the experiences and dynamics of women in your family shaped future generations?