

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Clear Skies, No Wind, 100% Visibility by Théodora Armstrong

1. How does the title of this collection embody or tie together the entire book?
2. Creatures of all sorts feature abundantly in the stories. “Rabbit,” “Fishtail,” “Whale Stories,” “The Spider in the Jar,” and “Mosquito Creek,” all contain animals, both imaginary and real. Even “The Art of Eating” contains important references to creatures. Pick two of the above stories and discuss how the characters interact with or view wildlife in each of them. What do you think is the significance of these interactions?
3. Nature, or landscape, is also featured prominently in these stories. What roles does the landscape play in “Fishtail” and “Mosquito Creek,” especially? Can you think of another story in which it influences the characters?
4. Compare and contrast the parenting approaches in “Rabbit,” “Fishtail,” and “The Art of Eating.”
5. What do you think the final paragraph, and particularly the last line — “And just like that, everything slips away” — means in “Fishtail”?
6. The theme of connection as well as relationships between siblings, parents and children, and friends is very important in this book. Describe the sibling relationships in “Fishtail” and “Thanks to Carin.” How are they similar? How are they different?
7. “The Art of Eating” tells the story of a chef who harangues his staff and drinks on the job while fatherhood looms ahead of him. How do you explain his behaviour?
8. In “The Art of Eating,” Charlie “feels hollowed and equates that with hunger, a need to be filled.” How does this sentence encapsulate the metaphor of the story?

9. Discuss "Whale Stories." Why does William lie about the whale and kill the dog in his trap? What is this story really about? How did you react to it?
10. The ability to see, whether objects or truths, and the visibility of things both tangible and conceptual, embodies a strong theme in this book. How does the author explore this in "Fishtail," "Clear Skies, No Wind, 100% Visibility," and "Thanks to Carin?"
11. Although the stories in this collection explore serious matters such as death, coming of age, suffering, rejection, and responsibility, there is also humour. What, if anything, made you laugh?
12. Which story did you like best, and why?