

BETWEEN BEFORE & AFTER

1. *Between Before and After* is, at its core, an intense look at family relationships, positive and negative. Which relationship in the book resonates most with you and why?
2. This book takes place in two different historical periods. Did you have any previous knowledge about these times and places? And how do you think that knowledge affected your ability to imagine the world in which the story takes place?
3. *Between Before and After* is told in dual narratives. If you could hear this same story from another character's perspective, who would you choose?
4. Elaine makes a very conscious decision not to confide in the adults in her life for fear that they would separate her and her brother, or at least send them to an orphanage. Do you think her actions were justified? And, how do you think the events of the story would be different if she had told someone everything from the beginning?
5. Both Molly and Elaine have younger brothers for whom they are responsible. How might their characters and this story have differed if they were the ones who were the younger siblings?
6. Elaine and Stephen both grew up without a mother and with an abusive alcoholic father. Yet, Stephen always seems to maintain hope and wonder, while Elaine tends in the opposite direction. Why do you think their view of their circumstances and the way they allow it to affect their lives differs so wildly?
7. The story of Hansel and Gretel is woven throughout this book. How did that element enhance or detract from your enjoyment of the story?
8. Uncle Stephen is thought to have performed a miracle. Do you believe in religious miracles? If not, do you think belief in miracles is harmless or harmful? What effect do you think this belief has on the believers?
9. Grown-up Elaine is a writer who documents the lives of others. How do you think her work gives us a glimpse into her heart? Why might delving into other people's pasts be the best work for Elaine?
10. The whole book builds up to Molly discovering Elaine's secret. Describe how you felt when you realized who Arthur was. What do you think about him as a character?
11. Elaine doesn't meet her son until he is an adult. And she admits that their relationship may take some time. What difficulties do you think there are in relating to an adult that there are not when interacting with a child?
12. Uncle Stephen says, "We don't always know what a story means up front. In fact, we can't know until we know the beginning and the end." What does this story mean to you? How has its impact on you changed as you were reading?



Maureen McQuerry is an award-winning poet, novelist, and teacher. Her YA novel, *The Peculiars* is an ALA Best Book for YA 2013, Bank Street and Horn Book recommended book, and a winner of the Westchester Award. Her most recent books are a MG fantasy duo, *Beyond the Door*, a Booklist top Ten Fantasy/SciFi for Youth and *The Telling Stone*, a finalist for the WA State Book awards. Her poetry appears in journals and anthologies including: *The Southern Review*, *Smartish Pace*, *WA129* and *Georgetown Review*. She lives in Washington State.

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