



1. How does the author describe the Seine River flooding Paris? What kinds of adjectives, imagery, and themes does she use? Is this version of Paris different than the “postcard image” that tourists are familiar with? Did you find these descriptions gloomy, or realistic?
2. The Malegarde family love each other but don’t know how to talk to each other. Each member of the family has a secret. Discuss each unique secret, and how it affects their interactions. Do you personally believe that family secrets should be revealed, or should they remain hidden forever? Do you think that the truth is more painful than lying?
3. Part of the novel takes in the Drôme valley, in the south of France. Why is Paul so attached to his family home? Why are trees so important to him? Do you see any parallels between the author’s descriptions of this place and the story as a whole?
4. Paul Malegarde is the invisible man of this book, yet his letters—which begin each chapter and are read out loud by Linden at the end—gradually expose him. What kind of man was he? What do we learn about him? What is his final message?
5. Linden and Paul Malegarde have opposing personalities. Discuss specific differences you noticed between them. What do they discover about one another? What do you think Paul knew about Linden, his life, and his secrets? What did Linden suspect about his father’s?
6. This novel explores intimate subjects, such as coming out. Discuss those subjects and whether they would be dealt with differently if the novel were set in the USA. Discuss the coming out scene: how does Linden finally talk to his father about Sacha? What images and descriptions does the author use during this scene?

Discussion Questions



7. Discuss the author's use of indirect dialogue throughout the book. Why do you think de Rosnay chose this technique? Would you have preferred direct dialogue instead? Why or why not?
8. Linden is a famous photographer. What has made him so successful? Why is his work different than that of his peers? Discuss the importance of photography throughout the book, and how a photograph can tell a story without words. What does Linden learn about his father when he photographs him after the terrible storm at Versailles?
9. What was your impression of Linden at the beginning of the book? What about at the end? Over the course of the novel, how does he change and what does he learn about himself? If this book ever becomes a movie, which actor would you cast as Linden?
10. If you have read the author's other books—*A Secret Kept*, *Sarah's Key*, *The Other Story*, and *The House I Loved*—can you point to any common themes that can be found in every story?