



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR IDENTICAL BY ELLEN HOPKINS

1. How does Kaeleigh Gardella manage to balance two separate yet identical personalities, in the form of Kaeleigh and Raeanne? In what ways are Kaeleigh and Raeanne alike? In what ways are they different? How does Kaeleigh benefit from her split personalities?
2. What clues does author Ellen Hopkins provide, throughout the novel, to the fact that Kaeleigh and Raeanne Gardella are one and the same? Are most readers likely to be shocked and saddened when Ian reveals that Raeanne died years ago in a car crash, or are they likely to feel relieved that the ugly truth has finally been revealed?
3. What coping mechanism(s) does each member of the Gardella family use, to avoid or numb their pain? Why is each strategy successful or not? Is it better to avoid pain or work through it?
4. Why does Ray Gardella abuse his daughter, Kaeleigh? Why does Kay ignore the abuse? Why does Kaeleigh accept the abuse, without telling anyone? Why does Kaeleigh feel unable to tell Greta or Ian, both of whom she trusts, about the abuse?
5. Why does Raeanne wish she could satisfy her Daddy sexually? Why does she allow herself to be abused and used by other boys?
6. Why does Ray Gardella continue to drink, even after his drunk driving killed his daughter, Raeanne? Why does Kay Gardella continue to drink, even though she saw the destructive behavior of a drunk boyfriend and a drunk husband? Why do Ray and Kay allow their underage daughter to drink?
7. What is the role of religion in the novel? What efforts do Raeanne or Kaeleigh make, to get in touch with their own spirituality? Do Raeanne or Kaeleigh believe in God? Why or why not?
8. Why does Kaeleigh's boyfriend, Ian, stand by her despite her coldness and indecision? Why does he stand by her even when, in his eyes, she has cheated on him many times? Why does Kaeleigh pull away from Ian, even though she trusts him and they love each other?
9. Why do Ray and Kay Gardella focus more on appearances than on reality? Are political figures destined to hide their dirty laundry and ignore it, or is there another alternative?
10. What is dissociative identity disorder? Why has Kaeleigh developed this disorder? Will Kaeleigh likely be cured? Why does Raeanne vow that a small piece of her will always remain with Kaeleigh?
11. What is free verse? Why does the author, Ellen Hopkins, choose to write "Identical" in free verse? How and why does Hopkins interlock the end of each chapter with the beginning of the next? Why is the text sometimes jagged, sometimes smooth, sometimes formatted into shapes? How does the appearance of the text reflect its content? Would the novel read differently if it were formatted in narrative paragraphs rather than as free verse?

Discussion questions adapted from BookRags.com.

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