What words would you use to describe Minka’s character? What events or stories in the book most bring those qualities to life for you?

What are some reasons that Minka is reticent about telling anyone what happened to her at Scatterwood Lake, and asking questions of her mother and Reverend Kraushaar? Consider her personality, upbringing, and her understanding of what had occurred. What, if anything, might have been different in her life had she given voice to what happened?

Consider Reverend Kraushaar’s response to Minka’s assault. How do you feel about how he approached the situation? Was there anything about it that surprised you? In what ways, if any, do you think a church today might respond differently?

Minka’s hands are misshapen due to heavy farm work when she was a girl. How does this physical trait affect the way she views herself? When she is agonizing over whether to give her cherished daughter up for adoption, how does the sight of her own hands affect her decision?

How did Ms. Bragstad of the Mercy House help Minka not only feel like she was an adult, but help her become one as well? Was there someone in your life that assisted you in this transformation? In what ways were they there for you?

How does Minka feel when she learns that her sweetheart is still married; how does she respond and why? What advice might you have given her in that situation?

What motivates Minka to write decades’ worth of letters asking after her daughter? What is she hoping for, and how do you think she feels about the responses she receives? What effect do the letters, seemingly useless and forgotten for so many years, ultimately have when Ruth receives them?

Over the course of a hundred-year lifespan, Minka witnesses turbulent and rapidly changing times in American history: world wars, the Great Depression, the Civil Rights movement, JFK’s assassination, and more. What impact do these events have on her personally, and on her worldview? What world events are part of your own cultural memory and how have they impacted the world you live in?

Consider the various women who impacted Minka’s life, including Jennie, Jane, Ms. Bragstad, Roy’s mother, and her lost daughter Ruth. What kind of unique importance did each have for Minka during crucial, defining moments of her life? How might things have been different for Minka had these women not been there for her? What does this tell us about the importance of being intentionally present in the lives of the people we love?
Out of the evil thing that happened to Minka—the assault—came one of her life’s greatest gifts and an unexpected family legacy. How does Minka reconcile this? How does each affect her understanding of and relationship with God?

What do you think motivates Minka to finally pray her impulsive prayer to see Betty Jane again? Do you think she truly anticipates this prayer might be answered? Have you ever prayed for something that seemed impossible?

What finally prompts Minka to forgive her assailant and why? Do you know how it feels to forgive someone for a long-held hurt? What prompted you to take that step?

How does The Waiting enhance your understanding of what family means? For example, how might you have expected Minka to feel about Betty Jane’s adoptive parents? How does she actually feel about them?