

## My Dream of You

1. "I knew all about the act of love as a non-event," Kathleen de Burca says, "but I still believed it was the act in which one person can truly learn another, and truly build on what they learn." (p. 64) In what ways has this belief affected her relationships with lovers over the course of her life? Does she still believe this at the end of the book? Why or why not?
2. What does Kathleen's relationship with Caro reveal about her character? What about her friendship with Alex? With Jimmy? How does each person affect Kathleen's sense of herself?
3. The loss of Jimmy is the catalyst for Kathleen's return to Ireland. In what ways does his death challenge her perception of herself as "well defended against crisis, if it came from outside"? (p.7) What is she guarding herself against? What are her vulnerabilities?
4. Why is the story of the Talbot affair so compelling to the young Kathleen? Does she return to it in middle age for the same or different reasons?
5. "I think they were perhaps the happiest people in Europe, for a while...They had the old faith," Miss Leech tells Kathleen (p. 70). What role does Irish Catholic faith play in Kathleen's present life? What about her past?
6. "The country I was driving through was only a green space. I didn't care anymore what was outside," Kathleen says. (p. 490) Discuss the changing role of landscape throughout the novel. How does Mount Talbot of Marianne's time compare to Kathleen's basement apartment? What part of Kathleen's identity is linked to her travels? What about her experience of the cottage at Mellary? Her return to Uncle Ned's home?
7. To what extent does Kathleen know herself through her body? Has her perception of herself been changed by her affair with Shay? How or how not?
8. "We're middle-aged women now and we have to forgive the past—for our own sakes," Kathleen tells her sister. (p. 498) What has led her to this conclusion? Has Kathleen come to terms with her own aging? Why or why not?

9. "I could choose what to believe about the Talbot scandal. I would choose what to believe." Kathleen says near the end of her journey. (p. 486) What stake has she placed in her passionate imagining of the two lovers? What forces have shaped her thinking about the Talbots at this point? Have her assumptions about romantic love been challenged or reinforced by her journey home? By her affair with Shay? Discuss.
  
10. Discuss the various ways in which women's roles are presented in the novel. How do the mothers in the story (Kathleen's mother, Caro, Annie, Ella) compare with Kathleen? How is she challenged by the women in her life as compared to the men?

Adapted from [www.penguin.com](http://www.penguin.com)