

1. Do the Latours have heirlooms in a traditional sense? What functions do heirlooms typically play in a family? What function do heirlooms have in your family?
2. *Heirlooms* is a collection of linked stories in which characters and/or their descendants appear and disappear and return again over time. Does the short story form offer the reader something special that chapters might not?
3. Was there a character you particularly liked or identified with in these stories? Why? Is it important to you as a reader to like characters in fiction?
4. How do these stories inform your knowledge of World War II and Occupied France? What new insights do you gain?
5. In her memories and stories of the past, Lise thinks of herself as lucky, yet she has faced great difficulties time and again. Is she lucky? Or is she unlucky, as Genny seems to indicate in the final story when she claims “the unlucky are always the first to speak of luck”?
6. Immigration is a fraught issue, which often means leaving behind people and possessions and adjusting to a new language and culture. What insights do you gain about these matters from the Latours’ experiences?
7. What are some of the ways the characters in *Heirlooms* are changed and shaped by the war?
8. In “The War Ends Many Times,” Simone manages her concerns by consciously pushing them away. What is your response to this coping mechanism? Do you think it would work for you, and if not, what would? How do other characters in *Heirlooms* cope with fear or loss?
9. In “La Poussette,” Sylvie Beauchard denounces the Latours, the new family in her community and moves on with her life. What is your reaction to Sylvie? Do her personal problems justify her actions? What does knowing her motivation provide the reader?
10. How would you describe the conflicted nature of Jean and Roger’s shared history and friendship in “En Voyage”? Does the author take sides? Do you?
11. How do you feel about Allegra’s decision not to tell Maman about Alain’s death in “White Lies”? Do you think Maman eventually knows the truth on some level? What is lost by lying to her? What, if anything, could be gained by telling the truth? What is the effect of lying on Genny and how does this change over time?
12. How important are rituals, such as Genny’s placing a stone on her mother’s grave? Are rituals ever heirlooms?
13. In “Block Party,” Magda doesn’t want to be defined by the tattooed numbers on her arm. In what ways do those numbers change her identity? Do you agree with her being silent about her history?
14. In one story, the author writes about American idioms. How does the author use language or languages to shape her stories?
15. When the shrine is removed and Genny’s tree cut down, in “In Memoriam,” she actually isn’t happy. Why? Does she know why?
16. Joanna Scott says that with this book, Rachel Hall adds “powerful imaginative truth to the historical record.” In what ways do novels help us understand our history? What are the limitations of fiction?