Book Club Questions

The main protagonist in the book, Stewie, takes his responsibility for caring for his grandmother’s chickens and egg delivery business very seriously. When one of his favorite chickens, Mabel, becomes ill, Stewie tells his sister that he will stay at Mabel’s side because “nobody should have to be alone.” What does this say about Stewie’s values as a person? Do you think that some of his reaction to Mabel’s illness comes from losing his grandmother?

Stewie insists that animals know when you care by your actions and your words. He believes they are much easier to connect with than others may think. Do you agree with him? Do you think his sister made the right decision letting him stay home from school to care for Mabel?

In an effort to comfort Stewie after Mabel’s death, Marilyn makes the effort to visit Stewie for the first time. She tells him, “It’s always something is lost, but something else is gained.” What are some examples in the story that show this to be true?

The book deals in a sensitive way with the many layers and stages of grief. The author explores the concept of deciding when the time is right to move on, and that experiencing grief is not a straight line. How do Stewie and Marilyn differ in the way they experience grief?

Marilyn and Stewie have a very complicated yet deeply rooted relationship. How does their friendship ultimately help them get through difficult times?

When Stewie hopes to teach Elsie to fly, he soon comes to realize, to his disappointment, that it’s inhumane and not fair to expect Elsie to do something she’s not built to do. Why do you think he worked so hard to help Elsie feel that she is not to blame?

Stewie’s sister worries that he feels responsible for fixing everyone around him. What are some of Stewie’s biggest challenges he has to face to overcome this issue?

One of the many things Stewie takes away from his counseling sessions is that there are no wrong feelings. What do you think his counselor meant by this, and do you agree? Why do you think people tend to bury their emotions, and how does Stewie come to realize that may not be best?

A large part of Stewie’s inner struggle and anger comes from the fact that he never got to say goodbye to his grandmother. Dr. Briggs tells Stewie that “anger is not without its purpose.” He is trying to give Stewie a compass to help him find his own way. What are some of the main insights and healings that Stewie draws from these sessions?

After Marilyn’s death, Stewie becomes despondent about starting to care deeply about people again when they’re just going to die. He weighs out the concept that either you have no one at all in your life, or you have people you care about but risk losing. How does he come to resolve this dilemma and decide how to move forward?