

Discussion Questions

1. What does the title mean to you?
2. What were your expectations before starting the book? Did they align with your reading experience or differ, and in what way? Did anything surprise you?
3. What are some recurring symbols in *The Say So*? What might these symbols mean?
4. Compare Edie and Meera. How are the women similar? How are they different? What are your thoughts about their interactions?
5. Luce is a character who grows up feeling unmothered. What is your response to her?
6. Both sections of the book take place in the past, in the 1950s and 1980s. What aspects have changed since then? What hasn't changed? How would this book be different if a section took place today?
7. Part I is called "The Bargain." What is being bargained? Who is doing the bargaining in these situations? Do you believe that Edie and Meera really have choices and to what extent?
8. Franks writes about the ways we invent narratives about other people. Do you think most of these narratives turn out to be useful or harmful?
9. Edie's and Simon's parents go to great lengths to preserve family image and to give their children an ostensibly easier future. What is a parent's responsibility in these difficult situations? What about the children's responsibilities?
10. What's your reaction to the various instances of secret-keeping in the novel? Are they helpful or destructive?
11. In Chapter 7, Edie's parents feel relieved upon hearing Mrs. Bruns say that their facilities will "transform" Edie. What kind of transformation do you think they had in mind, considering that they want Edie's life to look very much the same as before?

12. Do you think Luce made the right choice at the end of Part I? Would you have made the same decision?
13. Part I ends in forgiveness, when Edie recounts her past to her husband. He forgives her and she—for a while—feels some sense of comfort in it. Are these appropriate responses from Edie's husband or herself? How did this ending make you feel?
14. In some ways, Meera's story "repeats" Edie's story. For you, what is the effect of this repetition?
15. How would you judge Edie's choices? How about Meera's?
16. Responsibility fluctuates throughout the novel. What do you think these sets of parents owe to their children and vice versa? What did Edie's parents owe to her? What about Meera's? What do Edie and Meera owe to their children?
17. Dual naming happens repeatedly in this story (Edie confers the nickname "Luce" upon her friend, Edie goes by Susannah, Meera goes by her legal name Maria, the babies get renamed.) Do you think this dual personhood is a useful act of self-preservation or do you think this does more harm to the characters?
18. In Part III, Meera thinks, "maybe that is the job of parents, to let the children be the ones to have the ideas, to let their children save themselves." What do you think this means in the context of the mothers in this book, especially Edie and Meera?
19. Franks has written before about our attraction to moral certainties, and how the need to live in a doubt-free world might affect certain characters' decision making. What effect do you think the search for such black and white certainties has upon Franks' characters? Upon the lives of people in the real world?