

Banishing Verona

By Margot Livesey

(Page numbers refer to the hardcover edition.)

1. What makes Verona flee after the first night she spends with Zeke? Why does she nail her clothes to the floor? How does Zeke understand this gesture?
2. Zeke often feels ill at ease with other people yet in less than forty-eight hours he falls in love with Verona. Why does he respond to her so strongly? Verona is seven months pregnant and the host of a radio show. What attracts her to a man who paints houses for a living and can't tell jokes?
3. How does Zeke function in the world? Why is restoring antique clocks the perfect hobby for him and why does he think that the clocks amplify his spirit? Zeke tells a nurse that his feelings stay constant as cathedrals. (p.34) Is this true? How does he cope with the fact that other people are less reliable? What caused his breakdown?
4. One of Henry's teachers claims that he was born without a conscience but Henry insists that he does have a conscience, he just ignores it. What sort of a man is Henry? How does he rationalize what he does with his grandfather's will? Verona says she and Henry share the same corrupt moral gene. (p.200) Do you agree? Why does Verona feel such a sense of responsibility to Henry when he clearly thinks only about himself?
5. Verona, Zeke and Toby each earn their living doing something they would probably do even if they weren't paid. How is Henry's attitude to money different? How does this affect his relationship with his sister, his best friend and the woman he hopes to marry?
6. After Verona loses her temper when she burns the carrots, she asks Zeke what makes him angry—what does? On p. 186 Verona says that it is easier to be furious than to acknowledge what the fury conceals. How does this illuminate her approach to life so far?
7. Zeke believes that his mother regards him as "broken beyond fixing." Is this really how Gwen sees him? To what extent does her behavior exacerbate his difficulties? What is the nature of Zeke's disorder? Does the novel suggest that his difficulties also have their rewards?
8. Zeke is described as looking like a Raphael angel and Henry is referred to as beautiful. How do these two very different men relate to their appearance? What else do they have in common that attracts Verona to Zeke? 9. What makes Zeke decide to tell his father about his mother's infidelity? Was this the right choice? What are Zeke's responsibilities towards his parents?
10. Gwen puts Zeke in the middle of her relationship to Maurice, and makes him feel guilty about not working in the grocery store. What are the consequences of her manipulation?
11. Jill and Zeke both feel out of place in America. Would they have become friends if they had met in London? What do they have in common besides being visitors to a foreign country?
12. On p. 317 Verona observes that she is not trying to find Zeke literally, but rather the part of him that cares for her. Why does she repeatedly fail to contact Zeke when she is in America?

13. Near the end of the novel Verona tells Zeke about a princess who is immune to gravity except when she swims in the palace lake. What does Verona hope to suggest by telling this story?

14. What does the title *Banishing Verona* refer to? What does Zeke mean at the end of the novel when he says that he'll 'try'? Is there a future for Zeke and Verona?

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