

Discussion Questions for *One Good Mama Bone*

1. The book opens with two scenes that show how the two mothers, Sarah and Mama Red, come by motherhood. How are they different? The same? When did you first know that Sarah Creamer has a “mama bone?”
2. What expectations are set in those opening scenes? For Sarah? For Mama Red?
3. What about the buzzards and the violence they bring? Was that necessary for the story? Why or why not? Would your opinion have been any different if a man had written the book?
4. How much of a role did Sarah’s mother, Teeniebelle, play in Sarah’s life?
5. What about the role of kindness in the novel, especially towards Sarah. What effect did it have on you, as a reader? Did you find that it leavened all of the hardship?
6. Sarah has a friendship with both Mattie and Mildred. How are these two friends and friendships similar? Different?
7. Shoes factor in significantly in the book, such as Sarah’s walking in Harold’s boots. Where are the other mentions? And what do they symbolize for each character?
8. What is significant about the author’s choice of names? Sarah says everybody deserves a name.
9. There are mentions of “being marked” with blood and with grease. What is their significance? What is the difference between the two?
10. Did you learn anything about cows? What? Do you view them any differently now? If so, how?
11. What did you think about the bolded sections for Mama Red? Did they add anything to the story? If so, what? Why do you think the author wrote from Mama Red’s point-of-view?
12. Why does Sarah talk to Mama Red? Did you believe that she could? Why or why not? What does Sarah learn from Mama Red? Does Mama Red learn anything from Sarah?
13. What is the significance of the ladybugs for Luther?
14. How are Luther and Ike similar? Different?
15. What significance does the past play in this novel for Sarah? Luther? Ike?
16. In part, Sarah’s life is defined by food—the presence of it and then the lack of it and the raising of it. How did this shape Sarah’s character?

17. Sarah never gets to go to church as a child, something she feels awkward about, living as she does in the religious South. Why do you think the author chose to not have her attend as an adult? Does Sarah ever find salvation? How?

18. Part of this novel addresses parenting, specifically motherhood but not exclusively so, as fathers and father figures play a huge role in this novel. What do you think the book says about motherhood? About parenting, in general?

19. As with many other novels about the South, this book addresses the subject of race, specifically racial inequality. But it's in a context that requires one to consider other kinds of inequalities. What are those others?

20. What about the conclusion to the Luther/LC story. What does it say about consequences? Could it have ended another way? If so, how?

21. What does the book say about the 4-H experience?

22. What about the relationship between Ike and Sarah. Were you disappointed they didn't get together? Could they ever?

23. Each of the characters yearn for something. What do you think each yearns for? Did any of them get it? Which ones?