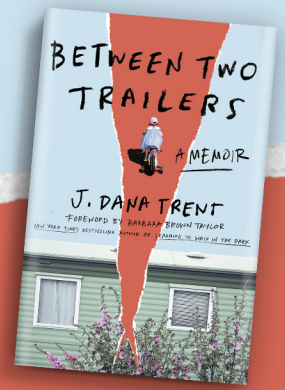
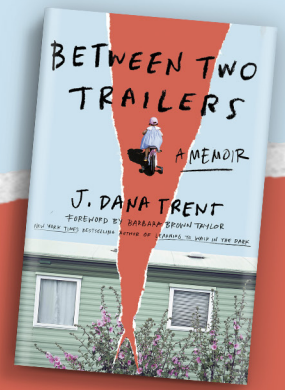


QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION



1. Before You Begin: Consider your hopes for reading this book and reflect on one thing you hope to take away from this story.
2. Preface: “This is a book for anyone who thinks they can’t go home.” What, if anything, keeps you from “going home” to a literal place, or coming home to yourself?
3. Foreword: Take a moment to reflect on Barbara Brown Taylor’s line that “there is more at work in all of our stories than any of us knows.” Which stories in your life do you suspect have more to show you?
4. Chapter 1: We are introduced to a new world and three main characters in that world. Consider the setting of Vermillion County, Indiana: What strikes you about this place? What about King, the Lady, and Budgie: What desires do you suspect drive each of these characters? What are the stakes for each character?
5. In Chapter 2, the dynamics within this nuclear family come into focus. What do you make of King’s marriage to the Lady? What’s your sense of the Lady’s relationship to Budgie?
6. Chapter 3: Talk about the Lewmans. Uncle Leuge and King teach Budgie, Doggy, and Linda that “if you want to murder someone, you do it in Vermillion County.” Think about the connection between the brothers’ upbringing in this county and the way they raise their girls. Are their parenting methods legitimized by the dangers of this place? Why or why not? How do Grandmother and Grandfather (G&GL) factor into the Lewman family’s dynamic, especially as it relates to their sons and granddaughters?
7. Chapter 4: The Lady’s motivation and role in Carnival Captivations begin to take shape. What do you suspect is her driving force at this point in the story?
8. Chapter 5: Budgie and the Lady’s trip to Cincinnati highlights the dynamics of their mother-daughter relationship. How do you compare/contrast this with King’s relationship with Budgie? When we first meet Lee, what do you make of the Lady’s relationship with her son, Dana’s half-brother?
9. Chapter 6: Mental illness is an anchoring theme of this book. Here, the reader is given a front seat to the Lady’s obsession with self-help books and therapy. Based on what you know so far, consider the ways in which the Lady’s diagnoses and King’s diagnoses, along with their work in inpatient psychiatric hospitals, play into how they see themselves and Dana.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION



10. Chapter 7: Budgie/Dana returns home with King for the first time since the divorce. Consider their dynamic now versus what you read in Chapter 1. What's different? What's the same?
11. Chapter 8: Dana and the Lady are given a fresh start in Reidsville, North Carolina. Places in and of themselves are often “characters.” How does this “home” and character of Reidsville compare to Vermillion County?
12. Chapter 9: Budgie/Dana returns to Indiana for the summers. In many ways, she is still “between two trailers,” only now she is caught between being her father’s daughter and her mother’s daughter, and those identities are separated by geography. What do you make of these two cultures of Indiana and North Carolina? Have you ever been torn between two “homes”? If so, how so?
13. Chapter 10: For the first time, Dana is out from under the watchful eye of her parents—or so we think. What desires and stakes are driving her journey now?
14. Chapter 11: When tragedy strikes, Budgie/Dana returns to Vermillion County. How does your sense of this place and its residents differ from what you learned in Chapter 1?
15. The last chapter highlights themes of reconciliation, healing, and legacy. Consider the characters you met in Chapters 1–3. How have they grown? How have they remained the same? What desires and stakes now drive those who remain?
16. Return to your hopes for this book. What takeaways did you glean from this story. Or, as Barbara Brown Taylor puts it, “there is more at work in all of our stories than any of us knows.” What stories of your life do you suspect have more to teach you about family, healing, and home?