There’s a lot happening in this novel—below the surface and beneath the ache. Here are some questions to prime your reflections and help guide your discussion. Please do feel welcome to contact me for feedback, discussion, or to arrange a book talk in person. Fisher

Chapter 1: Roaring River Woman

1A. Rosie’s mother, Josephine, suffers three devastating losses and reacts somewhat differently each time. Discuss her reactions to the deaths of Kathleen, James, and Carleen. Have you encountered, or observed in others, changes in the experience of grief over time?

1B. In the final scene of the chapter, Rosie asks her mother where she came from, meaning, how did she manage to get herself between Rosie and the bear. “From the river here,” Josephine replies, “from the Roaring.” In what other ways is Josephine a “Roaring River woman?”

Chapter 2: Born of Ache

2A. Two childbirth scenes appear in this chapter; the birth of the twins and the birth of Grace Kirk. For each of the births, identify emotions felt by one of the characters, or that you felt while reading. Share your thoughts on differences and/or similarities between historical and current childbirth experiences.

2B. In what ways are Rosie’s feelings and actions “born of ache?”

Chapter 3: Mother’s Constitutional

3A. When Junior objects to Rosie coming with the men to exact justice on Ed Welsh, Kenny tells him, “Yur sister ain’t no girlie woman,” mirroring how Rosie describes her mother in the first line of the novel. In what ways is Rosie a “girlie woman” and in what ways is she not? What is a girlie woman?

3B. At the end of the chapter, when Josephine says they might have been able to save Eileen “if only we had knew,” Rosie says nothing because she feels too guilty. Identify other characters whom you feel carry some responsibility for what happened to Eileen and explain your thinking.

Chapter 4: The Relief

4A. Identify and talk about a couple of strategies Rosie uses to get out of seriously considering Culain’s desire to move north. These may include behaviours, responses, or internal strategies.

4B. When Josephine decides it’s best for Albert to move down to Rosie’s, Rosie asks, “Why would it hafta be me?” From a structural point-of-view, why did the author decide to create a situation in which Rosie was the one who had to care for the old man at the end.

Chapter 5: A Terrible Twinning

5A. In the first scene of the chapter, Josephine explains her thinking on the need not to repeat the same mistake when a young girl runs away from home. This decision turns out to have disastrous consequences for Beatrice and the whole family. But think back to when you first read the scene. Did you find Josephine’s thinking sound? Why or why not?

5B. Was Jack Elliott a good man? Discuss.

Chapter 6: A Seven Year Ache

6A. Identify some of the clues that Ronald was not a good person, even before he was caught assaulting Cecilia.

6B. In this chapter, Rosie reflects on the “seven year ache” as sexual desire. Select an earlier chapter and talk about another kind of deep ache that influences Rosie’s life and decisions.

Chapter 7: Six Men for Every Girl

7A. Choose one of Rosie’s dreams. What do you think it reveals about her subconscious, her inner life and emotions? What is it trying to tell her?

7B. Is Norma Mares a good friend?

Conclusion

8A. Talk about Rosie’s worries for her brother, Kenny. How do she and her mother express, or not express, their feelings? Why? What do you think will happen to Kenny?

8B. Based on all we’ve learned about Rosie in this novel, what are your hopes and fears for her? What do you think she will do and what do you think she should do?

8C. Why does the author choose the title, “Six Men for Every Girl,” for Rosie’s final chapter?