

Touching Stars

Reading guide

1. In spite of their difficult relationship, Gayle has made a decision to open her home to her ex-husband Eric in hopes of strengthening the bonds between him and their three sons. Do you think this was a good idea, or did you feel that she was exposing the boys to further heartache, given the many times Eric had let the boys down?
2. While facing his recovery and uncertainty about his career, Eric has to come to terms with the past and future of his life as a family man. Did you feel his efforts at getting to know and connect with his sons were adequate or too little, too late?
3. Eric and Dillon, the youngest son, have the most problematic relationship. Dillon was an unplanned child, an added burden on a man who valued his freedom. Do you believe that the way a child comes into a family can affect the attitudes of his parents? Is it possible for a father to bond with a teenage son if they did not bond when the son was a child?
4. Noah, who is closest to Gayle, dislikes his father the most because he feels that Eric has left her with all the work while he pursued his own happiness. Given that this is at least partially true, is it believable that Eric and Noah might find a better relationship? What would have to happen first?
5. Jared is facing very adult decisions in his relationship with Brandy. Do you agree with his choices? Do you think Gayle has done a good job preparing him for adulthood?
6. Jared makes a decision at the end of the novel that stuns and distresses his parents. At eighteen, is Jared old enough in your opinion to decide his future path? Do Eric and Gayle have a right to try to change his mind?
7. Since becoming neighbors, Travis and Gayle have developed a strong friendship without romantic involvement. How possible is it for a man and a woman to be best friends without romance? Do you know someone of the opposite sex who has been simply a close friend?
8. Early each day, Gayle finds peace on the terrace at the Daughter of the Stars. Is there a place or time of day where you collect your thoughts?
9. In the Civil War portion of the novel, Miranda and her family give shelter and aid to a mysterious stranger. Can you imagine yourself in her shoes? What would you do?

10. In both the historical and contemporary portions of the story, the characters are facing feelings about marriages that have ended. What other similarities did you find in these stories? What differences?