

Part Three: England, 1978

1. Faulks's novel was first published in 1993 but he chose to set the modern parts of the text in the late 1970s; why do you think he did this? What difference does it make to the story? Think about the relationships, the connections Elizabeth is able to make, and also to people's attitudes about the First World War over time.
2. The opening lines of Part Three are filled with small ironies and connections to the previous parts of the novel. Why, for example, is Elizabeth introduced on the Underground? Why is she impatient to get home to see if there are any letters or phone calls? Think about the men at the Front and their need (or otherwise) for letters and contact from home.
3. Elizabeth has been on a business trip to Germany and when she gets home finds she has a letter from Brussels; why are these places significant to the narrative? Think about what it suggests about the long-term effects of the War; in other words, what did the War achieve?
4. The man in the carriage who begins to sing 'It's a long way to Tipperary ...' is described as a 'madman'; whose opinion is this – Elizabeth's or Faulks's? The song is called 'an old music hall' song; who else sang it in an earlier time?
5. Go through the first five paragraphs and pick out all the words and phrases which are reminiscent of the descriptions of the men's experiences in the trenches. Why do you think Faulks has depicted Elizabeth's journey in this way?
6. Why has Faulks ended the description of Elizabeth's journey home with the one line paragraph, 'Up in her flat she ran herself a bath and, when she was comfortably immersed, opened the letter.'? What does it show us about her life and its difficulties?
7. In the next few pages of the novel, Elizabeth goes to visit old friends, Lindsay and Mark, for dinner. Why does Faulks show us Elizabeth in this very domestic and warm setting? Think about the contrasts between this friendship group and those of the men at the Front.
8. Why do you think Faulks has chosen a female as the protagonist for these parts of the novel? Do you think a male descendant would have been a better choice? In what ways is Elizabeth a successful character? What does her story add to that of the overall narrative?