

## The End

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After reading the end of the novel, discuss the following questions with a partner and then present your ideas to the class:

1. When Maryam and Dave meet at the beginning of Chapter 10 do you get the impression that Maryam is pleased to see Dave or not? Give reasons for your answer.
2. Dave tells Maryam, 'Bitsy's sick.' Why do you think Tyler makes Bitsy ill rather than any other character (or any character at all after Connie)?
3. On page 302, Tyler writes, 'Bitsy might have her faults but at least they were well-meaning faults. She was a good-hearted, generous woman, and Maryam felt the same sympathy for her that she would feel for an old friend.' Do you think this is an accurate summary of Bitsy's character? Do you, as a reader, feel sympathy for Bitsy?
4. On page 304, through Tyler, Maryam ponders, 'Next January she would be sixty-five years old – not ancient, but even so, she couldn't hope for her world to grow anything but narrower from now on. She found this thought comforting rather than distressing.' What do you think is meant by this remark and how well does it fit in with what we already know of Maryam's character?
5. Maryam remembers that Dave once said to her, "'Childhood?' ... 'Where did that come from? What difference does my childhood make? It's what we've boiled down to in the end that really matters – when we're left with just the dregs and the essence.'" In what ways does this comment summarise the novel and its themes?
6. In this last chapter Tyler writes about: illness; relationships; ageing; feelings of foreignness – do you think she tries to put too much into this chapter or does it bring all the threads of the novel together? Explain your ideas.
7. The closing words of the novel are, 'They stopped. They turned. They looked up at her and they started smiling, and they waited for her to join them.' As an ending, do you find this happy; poignant; unsatisfactory; possibly the start of another novel or something else? Explain your ideas.
8. After reading the novel, what are your overall thoughts of the characters at the end? Think about whether, and in what ways, your feelings have stayed the same throughout or changed and what has caused these changes.