

A Thousand Acres by Jane Smiley

Brief introduction to the author and her works

Jane Smiley was born in Los Angeles, but grew up in Missouri. She studied English literature at Vassar College, and graduated with a B.A. in 1971. Smiley spent the rest of the decade obtaining a number of degrees in literature and creative writing: an M.A. in 1975, an MFA in 1976, and a Ph.D. in 1978, all from the University of Iowa, the most prestigious school for creative writing in the United States. Smiley published her first novel, *Blind Barn*, in 1980, when she was 31 years old. She had begun working on the novel while she was an MFA student at Iowa; it was a critical success, but not a commercial one. The same was the case for her next three novels, *At Paradise Gate* (1991), *Duplicate Keys* (1984), and *The Greenlanders* (1988). Smiley's greatest critical and commercial success was *A Thousand Acres*, published in 1991. This novel won both the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Critics Circle Award, two of the three most prestigious prizes for fiction offered to American novelists. Since 1991, Smiley has published 11 novels, four nonfiction books, and five children's books. She resides in California.

Brief summary

Larry Cook is a prominent Midwestern farmer with three daughters, Ginny (the eldest, and the narrator of the novel), Rose, and Caroline, the youngest. Ginny is married to Ty, a farmer, Rose is married to Pete, a musician from another state, and Caroline, the only one of the three daughters who attended college, is soon to be married to Frank. Rose and Ginny live on their father's land, while Caroline lives in the city of Des Moines. Rose has been in and out of the hospital for breast cancer treatment, and will have to go undergo regular tests for the rest of her life.

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As he gets older, Larry comes up with a plan to avoid paying death taxes or property taxes on his land: he'll pass on his land to his three daughters while he's still alive. When Larry announces his plan, Ginny and Rose are in favour of the idea, while Caroline is sceptical of it. Larry, a drunk, taciturn man, spitefully tells Caroline to get out of his house. He cuts Caroline out of the will, leaving Rose and Ginny in control of his hugely valuable farmland. Around the time that Larry divides up his land, Jess Clark, the son of Harold Clark, Larry's friend and rival, comes back to town after years spent travelling the world. Jess, the child of Harold and

the brother of Loren Clark, is a magnetic, charismatic young man, who fled to Canada rather than fight in the Vietnam War. He immediately charms Ginny.

With Larry's property now in the hands of Ginny and Rose, and with Caroline married to Frank and practicing law in Des Moines, life moves on. Ginny and Rose have big plans for their land; they want to convert it into a modern, up-to-date farm. Ginny and Rose take turns cooking meals for their aging father. As time goes on, though, Larry becomes increasingly morose, to the point where he ignores his children altogether. Ginny is reminded that Caroline was always Larry's favourite child. Jess ingratiates himself with Ty, Pete, Rose, and Ginny, and before long the family has established a fun tradition: Monopoly night. However, Ginny and Rose continue to worry about Larry, who increasingly keeps to himself and seems bitter at his children.

Tension builds as word of Larry's increasingly volatile behaviour reaches Rose and Ginny. Larry drinks heavily, and on one occasion drives all the way to Des Moines and back. Rose, who's tougher on her father than Ginny, suggests that Larry has Alzheimer's disease. After months of silence, Ginny calls Caroline, who accuses her of stealing Larry's property and only pretending to be reluctant to take it off his hands.

Jess takes long walks with Ginny, and Ginny finds herself falling in love with him. Ginny opens up to Jess about her inability to have children: she's had five miscarriages in the past, though Ty only knows about three of them. The family learns that Larry has been in a car accident: he was driving while drunk, and hurt himself. After the accident, Larry becomes even more morose and unwilling to talk to his children. Soon after the accident, Ginny finds herself fantasizing about Jess, and eventually they have sex.

One night, Pete discovers that his pickup truck is missing, and deduces that Larry has driven off with it. He and Ty track down Larry—when they bring Larry back home (in the middle of a storm), Larry calls Rose and Ginny “whores” and accuses them of stealing his property and not taking care of him. He then stubbornly walks away from them, out into the rain. Late that night, Rose opens up to Ginny about her past: after their mother (Mrs. Cook) died, when Rose

was a teenager, Larry raped her repeatedly. Ginny can't remember anything of the kind happening to her.

Ginny and Rose proceed with their farming, borrowing lots of money to expand their land's capability. Ginny and Rose try to confront Larry about his abuse at the annual church potluck, but at the potluck Larry and Harold (with whom Larry's been staying) criticize Rose and Ginny for being bad daughters, and the entire community begins to turn against Rose and Ginny. Soon after the potluck, Ginny returns to Larry's house, which is now empty, and remembers being raped by Larry—a memory she's repressed for most of her adult life. She realizes that she and Rose always protected Caroline from Larry's advances: by offering themselves up, they ensured that Larry never tried to rape his youngest daughter.

Jess becomes increasingly distant from Ginny, and Harold has a bad accident: he sprays himself with ammonia and ends up blinding himself. Soon after, Rose and Ginny receive word that Larry (with help from Caroline) is suing them to reclaim his property. Rose and Ginny, along with their husbands Pete and Ty, hire a lawyer, Jean Cartier, who advises them to be "perfect" in the way they run their farmland. Meanwhile, Ty discovers that Ginny had a miscarriage that she hid from him, and a distance grows between them.

Soon after, Pete has a drunken argument with Harold Clark, drives off into the night, and ends up crashing into a pond and drowning. In the following days, Ginny learns from Rose why Pete was arguing with Harold: he'd learned from Rose that Rose is having an affair with Jess. Ginny is jealous and offended that Rose would "steal" Jess from her. Secretly, she finds hemlock, a powerful poison, and prepares a jar of poisoned sausages, which she gives to Rose in the hopes that she'll poison herself.

The hearing regarding Larry's land proceeds, and Larry is put on the witness stand. He's clearly senile, and fails to convince the judge that his case has any grounds. The judge sides with Rose and Ginny: their contract is valid, and they own Larry's land. After the hearing, Ginny is afraid that her family has been torn apart forever. Impulsively, she tells Ty she's leaving him and moves to Saint Paul, where she takes a job as a waitress and never moves back to her home.

Years pass, with Ginny receiving occasional letters from Rose (who, to her confusion, hasn't died from the sausages yet). One day, years later, Ginny receives a visit from Ty, who, he explains, is moving to Texas. Farming the land has been hard work, and the farm has fallen deep into debt. Ty comes to ask Ginny for a divorce, but she never explicitly agrees to it.

Then, years later, Ginny learns that Rose is back in the hospital, very sick. She visits Rose and learns that Rose will die of cancer soon. After Ty's move to Texas, Rose has become the sole owner of Larry's old farmland. Ginny takes care of Rose's daughters, Linda and Pamela, but she refuses to reconcile with Rose, even on Rose's deathbed. She does, however, tell Rose about her plan to poison her. Rose is oddly uninterested in the plan—she tells Ginny that Jess left her long ago, and that Jess isn't the good, charismatic man Ginny thinks he is.

Rose dies, leaving her property to Caroline and Ginny. Ginny and Caroline reunite in their father's old house, and Ginny considers telling Caroline about how Larry used to rape her and Rose, but chooses not to. As the novel comes to an end, Ginny finds the jar of sausages, still in Rose's cellar, and throws it away. She takes care of Linda and Pamela after their mother's death, but continues to feel a profound sense of loneliness.

List of Characters

Major Characters

Ginny Cook Smith

The protagonist and narrator of the novel, daughter of Larry Cook and wife of Tyler Smith.

Ginny is a frustrated farmer's daughter, full of repressed desires and thwarted ambitions.

Along with Rose Cook Lewis

Rose Cook Lewis

The daughter of Larry Cook, and wife of Pete Lewis. Like her sister, Ginny Cook Smith, Rose is an ambitious, often greedy woman, but Rose is more open about her feelings than Ginny

Caroline Cook

The youngest of Larry Cook's daughters and her father's favourite. Caroline is the only Cook daughter to go to college and (it's suggested) the only daughter not to be sexually abused by Larry.

Laurence Cook

The patriarch of the Cook family, and the father of Rose, Caroline, and Ginny, Larry Cook is a proud, intimidating farmer who's risen to own one thousand acres of fertile farmland.

Harold Clark

Larry Cook's neighbor and friendly rival, and father to Loren Clark and Jess Clark. Harold Clark is a seemingly easygoing, eccentric old farmer, but on closer inspection, he's surprisingly shrewd and perceptive.

Jess Clark

The son of Harold Clark, and the brother of Loren Clark, Jess Clark is one of the most ambiguous characters in the novel. Unlike others in his community, Jess seems relatively uninterested in farming.

Loren Clark

The son of Harold Clark and the brother of Jess Clark, Loren is a minor character in the text, in spite of his close ties to Jess, Harold, and Larry.

Mrs. Cook

While Larry Cook's wife never appears in the novel, her presence hangs over every page. In flashbacks, we learn that Mrs. Cook was a meek, submissive woman who always gave Larry what he wanted.

Tyler "Ty" Smith

The husband of Ginny Cook Smith, Ty Smith is a hardworking, ambitious farmer. Over the course of the book, his allegiances are never entirely clear.

Pete Lewis

The husband of Rose Cook Lewis, Pete is a talented musician, and not a native of Rose's community.

Marvin Carson

The community's most prominent banker, who arranges for Tyler Smith and Ginny Cook Smith to borrow money and develop their new farmland. Much as the Fool's comic status in King Lear

Minor Characters

Frank Rasmussin

Caroline Cook's husband in Des Moines, who never appears in person in the novel. Frank corresponds to the character of the King of France in King Lear.

Henry Dodge

The community's pastor.

Ken La Salle

The community's resident lawyer, who represents Larry Cook in court when he tries to sue his two eldest daughters. Ken corresponds to the character of Kent in King Lear.

Cal Ericson

One of Larry Cook's neighbours, who ended up selling his land to Larry and moving far away.

Mrs. Ericson

Cal Ericson's wife.

Ruthie Ericson

Cal Ericson's daughter, and Ginny Cook Smith's only real friend as a child.

Alison

A woman to whom Jess Clark was engaged.

Mary Livingstone

An elderly woman who knows Larry Cook's family.

Mel Scott

A poor farmer who was forced to sell his land to Larry Cook.

Dollie

A cashier in town.

Dinah

An antiques store owner.

Nelda

The owner of a café in town.

Jean Cartier

The lawyer who represents Ginny Cook Smith and Rose Cook Lewis in court against their father.

Pamela

Rose Cook Lewis's daughter, beloved by Ginny and raised by her after Rose's death.

Linda

Rose Cook Lewis's other daughter, beloved by Ginny and raised by her after Rose's death.

John Cook

Larry Cook's father, and one of the founders of the Cook farm.

Edith Cook

Larry Cook's mother.

Themes

Women, Sexual Abuse, and Fertility Theme Icon Revenge Theme Icon Appearance vs. Reality

Study questions

General Questions:

1. What do you think of the accuracy and detail of the Iowa settings? How are they important to the book?
2. What are the novel's formal and thematic parallels to King Lear? What contrasts are the reader supposed to notice?
3. Which of these contrasts reflect social changes since Shakespeare's time?
4. How reliable is Virginia Cook (Ginny) as a narrator? Does the reader's view of her change as the book progresses?
5. Is there a tension between the narrator's attachment to those around her and the fact that her account of their actions includes a critique?
6. What farm issues current in the 1980s are important to the plot? What does the novel seem to suggest about such issues as corporate farming, organic and intensive farm methods, capitalistic debt structures, the treatment of animals, and the effects of the high-capital requirements of contemporary farming?
7. What does the novel suggest may be some of the effects farm life can have upon family structure? To what extent are the Cook family's problems a result of their environment, and to what extent do they seem common human problems?
8. What are some feminist sub-themes of the novel? How does the gender division of farm labour and experience affect the lives of men and women alike?
9. How is the novel structured? How are themes of denial, family tension and repression manifested in the story?
10. Can you see this novel as an exploration of themes of aging and family care? Of good and bad parenting?

Book One

Chapter 1:

1. What are some instances of foreshadowing of future events in these opening chapters? What do we learn about the Cook family's past?
2. Under what circumstances had they acquired their land?

Chapter 2:

1. What do we learn about Ginny's relationship to her sisters? Might there be hidden complications in these relationships? What do we learn of her marriage?
2. How does she respond to Jess Clark on first meeting?

Chapter 3:

1. What had her mother's great-grandparents and grandparents added to their descendants' way of life?

Chapter 4:

1. What do we learn about Ginny and Rose's relationship to their father? How is the issue of transferring the farms brought up, and how does each daughter respond?
2. What reservations does Ginny express about her father's proclamation? What are her motives in accepting?
3. What plans do Loren, Ty, Pete, Rose and the others start to make at the prospect of land ownership? Are these plans evil? Misguided? Reasonable and conventional?
4. How does Ty respond to Caroline's reservations? To family quarrels in general?
5. What private hope does Ginny continue to cherish?

Chapter 5:

1. What do we learn about Pete's past, and his relationship to his father-in-law and wife?
2. Who prompts Mr. Cook to continue with his plans to transfer the farms to his daughters and sons-in-law? What might have been his motives?

Chapter 6:

1. What are Caroline's reasons for rejecting her share in the farm? Are these spelled out? Might these have been good ones?
2. What are Ginny's motives in attempting to dissuade her? At this point, what opinion does Caroline seem to hold of her father?

Chapter 7:

1. What does Jess Clark confide about his past and beliefs?
2. What characterizes the transfer of Larry Cook's land? Were these changes planned for and discussed? Might there have been some good reasons for such a transfer?
3. What aspects of the change are not discussed?
4. Why does Larry Cook exclude Caroline, and why don't the others seem to protest or care?
5. Could there have been a middle ground between involving her in farm operations and disinherit her?
6. How does book 1 end? Is the ending ominous? What plot expectations have been set up?

Book Two**Chapter 8:**

1. What did Mr. Cook think of his former neighbours the Ericsons? What had characterized their tastes and mode of farming, as opposed to his?
2. What background is given on Larry Cook's habits and tastes?
3. What is significant about Ty and Larry Cook's discussion of pig farming?

4. What do we learn about Jess Clark's relationship with his parents? Why had he not written his mother?

Chapter 9:

1. As the sisters go shopping after Rose's hospital check-up, what opinions do they express about their sister Caroline? About themselves?
2. As a child, what had Caroline declared she wished to be?
3. At the time, what is Ginny's view of her relationship with her sister Rose? Will this likely continue to be the case?

Chapter 10:

1. What do we learn about the sisters' rearing of Caroline after their mother's death? From what restrictions had they tried to defend her? From what aspects of her father's behaviour?
2. What unusual behaviour does Ginny note in her father? What gloomy outcome does Rose predict? Why does Ginny delay in talking over these changes with Caroline?

Chapter 11:

1. When Jess Clark eats with Ty and Ginny, what future plans does he discuss? What does Ty invite him to do? Was this a generous offer?

Chapter 12:

1. What is the importance of the extended Monopoly game? What does it reveal about the players? Do the outcomes mirror or concentrate some of the novel's themes?
2. Where are Rose's daughters attending school?
3. What unexpected purchase does Mr. Cook make? What happens to the cabinets? How do his children and sons-in-law interpret his behaviour? Do they differ?

Chapter 13:

1. What stance had Larry Cook taken toward his children's socializing?
2. Whom does Ginny meet when she takes her nieces swimming? What prompts her to tell Ginny of her mother's last wishes?
3. What does she recall and imply, and how does Ginny respond? What may lie behind Mary's regrets and silences?
4. What does Ginny come to understand about her mother? Are there reasons why she hasn't thought more about her? Why does she connect her mother with Rose?

Chapter 14:

1. What does Caroline call to ask? What unusual act has Larry Cook done in her absence?
2. What does she think of the fact that her sisters have signed the farm transfer papers?
3. What prompts Ginny's feeling that her family have failed? What disagreements surface at the dinner table and afterwards?
4. How does Ty assess Larry's behavior? Is there evidence for his views?
5. Does he wish his wife to turn her share of the farm back to her father? On what grounds does he defend Larry?

Chapter 15:

1. What interpretation does Jess give of his father Harold's behavior? Will this prove to be prescient?
2. How do he and Ty differ on their views of agriculture? Would a partnership between them have worked?

Chapter 16:

1. What does Larry Cook expect of breakfast?
2. What are some disagreements between Caroline and Ginny as they talk on the telephone?
3. Whom does Caroline hold responsible for her father's problems?
4. To what use had Caroline put her undergraduate interest in psychology? Were her insights valuable?

Chapter 17:

1. During his walk with Ginny, what topics does Jess wish to bring up? What has turned him against the idea of raising livestock?
2. What intentions does he think his father has toward him? Is he correct? Would he wish to remain in Zebulon County working his father's farm?
3. What parting act changes his relationship with Ginny?

Book Three**Chapter 18**

1. Under what circumstances had Larry Clark extended his farm holdings? Had he taken advantage of the needs and weaknesses of others to underpay them for their land?
2. What does Ginny lose when the Ericsons move away? Does Larry Cook seem greatly affected by his wife's death?

Chapter 19

1. What seems unusual about the circumstances of Caroline's marriage? How do Rose and Ginny respond to the news that their sister has married without letting them know?
2. What action by Rose disrupts their Monopoly game? What seems to have been her motive? What do we learn about her past behaviour, and that of her husband?
3. What news about Larry Cook's misadventures further disrupts their gathering? What causes Ginny's anxiety as they drive to the hospital in Mason City?
4. What contrast between Ty and Jess does Ginny form in her mind?
5. How does Ty advise she deal with her father's vagaries, and to what extent does she agree?
6. What emotion do they both associate with Rose?

Chapter 20:

1. What difficulties do Ginny and Rose experience in dealing with their father? What emotional strains are caused by the situation?
2. What is the effect of Rose's anger on Ginny?
3. What relationship does Ginny have with Rose's children? (151)
4. On what policy toward their father do the sisters agree? In the event is it successful?

Chapter 21:

1. From Jess's remarks, what do we learn about Ginny's miscarriages and their cause?

Chapter 22:

1. Does anyone feel anxiety as Ty and Ginny assume a large debt on the farm? To what extent is Ty responsible? Ginny?
2. During their visit to the chiropractor, how does Larry behave to Ginny? Over what issues do they quarrel? (175) Her response? Does she try to make peace? (176)

Chapter 23:

1. How do you explain the nature and meanness of Larry's outburst on the driveway? What if anything has prompted it?
2. What does Ginny infer from his slurs? Is she correct?
3. Are issues of senility important to the plot?
4. Why does Larry choose to stay out in the storm? What memories are evoked in Ginny's mind as she demands that he contribute labour to the farms? (beating, 183)

Chapter 24:

1. During the storm, what does Rose tell Ginny about their past? What is Ginny's reaction? The reader's? (192)

Chapter 25:

1. How are Ginny's emotions of shame described? (195)
2. In the event, where is Larry found? What metaphor is used to describe Ginny's emotions of the day? (horse in tight stall, 198)

Chapter 26:

1. Why does the family try to conceal their differences with Larry from the outside world? Who expresses concern over a possible rift, and what are his motives?
2. What annoying views does Harold express? On what grounds does he side with Larry?
3. What has been lost in the bulldozing of Ginny's former home? (206)

Chapter 27:

1. What prompts Ginny to visit her minister, and why does she leave before he is free to talk?

Chapter 28:

1. What type of food is served at the church potluck? Throughout the book are descriptions of food important in setting the ambiance?

2. What shocking events occur at the potluck? Who attacks first? What seems to have motivated Harold's aggression toward his son?

Book Four

Chapter 29:

1. What does Ginny remember about her mother? What does she recollect as she cleans her father's home? How does she react to this memory? (229, screams) Does this strike you as unexpected/out of character?

Chapter 30:

1. What causes Harold's accident, and what are some of its consequences? What increasingly exacerbates tensions between Ty and Ginny?
2. How do the sisters respond to Harold's illness? Does this seem justified? (239) How do they respond to the shock of their father's lawsuit?

Chapter 31:

1. What startling news does Ginny learn from her phone conversation with Caroline? (Ty believes she and Rose had pushed their father into the storm by lecturing him; Caroline resents their raising of her.)

Chapter 32:

1. What is significant about her encounter with Pete in the quarry? Why isn't he concerned about the lawsuit? What question does he ask her?

Chapter 33:

1. What evidence from the past does Ty find, and how does he react to the signs of her recent miscarriage?
2. What is revealed by Ty's hasty expenses? (256-57)
3. What does Ty tell her Rose had told him? (258) What opinion of Rose does he express? In your view, is he correct? (258)
4. How would you characterize his and Ginny's argument? What had Ty come to resent? (feels she has made the farm less stable by criticizing Larry)
5. What is the result of her pursuit of Jess at night? (263) What event occurs to close down Ty's plans for the farm? (bankers force halt)

Chapter 34:

1. What is the essence of Ginny's conversation with the minister? Does it concern religion? What seems unusual in her response to his well-meaning efforts to suggest reconciliation?
2. What does Ginny find when she travels to a nearby town? What conversation does she overhear between Caroline and her father?

Book Five

Chapter 35:

1. At what age had Ginny married? What does she recall of her father's entrance into her bedroom? How has the act of incest affected her future?

Chapter 36:

1. What does the lawyer advise Ginny and Rose and their husbands to do? In what ways does Ginny comply?
2. What sudden event disrupts their circle? (Pete's suicide) Was this expected? Does the violent death of one of the husbands alter the novel's tone and outcome? The future of the farms?

Chapter 37:

1. How do others react to Pete's death and funeral? Who gives the eulogy and are his words appropriate? What remarks are made by the minister? Who fails to attend?

Chapter 38:

1. What does Rose tell Ginny about her late husband, her relationship with Jess, and the cause of the empty water tank on Harold's lot? Is she concerned for Ginny's feelings? What had been a motive for her affair?
2. What opinions does Rose express regarding her father's growing senility?
3. How does Ginny respond to these revelations? What new understanding of Pete overcomes her?

Chapter 39:

1. What new "comprehension" of those around her does Ginny believe she has gained? Is the reader startled when she prepares poison for her sister?
2. Why is her anger directed against Rose rather than her father? In her memories, how is her father presented? Caroline?
3. What problems begin to occur on the farm, in part as a result of Pete's death? What does Ginny object to in her husband's choice of hogs to slaughter? Are you surprised that she has a strong opinion on such a matter?
4. What do you make of her decision to prepare hemlock sausages for her sister? Does the plan make sense? How would you describe Ginny's mental state at this point?

Chapter 40:

1. Why do the neighbours offer help for the Clark farm but not for that of the Cooks?
2. What seem to be some changes in Ginny's domestic habits during this period? For what anticipated event does she wait?
3. How does Larry Cook behave in the court room? Are there comic elements to his answers? What is added to the scene by the echoes of King Lear's grief over the body of Cordelia?
4. Which of Mr. Cook's remarks pains Ginny? Does she react appropriately? What rather unexpected suspicions and metaphors run through her mind?
5. Do Mr. Cook's responses affect the outcome of the case? Do the court case, the scene in the court, and its outcome seem probable to you?
6. What effect does it seem to have on the participants?

Chapter 41:

1. What seems to be Ginny's mood after the successful trial? Over what do Ginny and her husband quarrel?
2. What do you make of her request to Ty for a thousand dollars? Of the fact that he gives it to her, despite their financial constraints?
3. Has the reader been prepared for her departure? Ty? Ginny herself?
4. What is meant by her parting remark, "Now it's yours!"

Book Six:**Chapter 42:**

1. What are some features of Ginny's life in Minnesota? How does she respond to her new life as a waitress?
2. What kind of letters does she receive from Rose?
3. What important news does Ginny receive after the fact? What do you make of the fact that only one of the three sisters attended Larry Cook's funeral?
4. Does Mr. Cook's death soon after the trial cast any backward light on his prior actions?
5. What has happened to Jess Clark and the plans for organic farming? Is his departure consistent with his earlier pattern of life?
6. What do you suppose is contained in the "papers to sign" sent to Ginny? What has happened to the farm property in her absence? Would the profits from ½ of the farm have purchased more than a condo?

Chapter 43:

1. Who visits Ginny in her restaurant, and what does he give her? How does she respond to his visit?
2. What has happened to Ty and the farms during her absence? How had he reacted to the Cook trial? What decisions/economic changes had caused him to go under?
3. What has been Rose's reaction to the decay of the farms? What opinion does Ty express of Rose's accounts of Larry Cook's past?
4. What do Ty and Ginny feel about their past marriage? Of what does each accuse the other?
5. Had Ty been suspicious of his wife on the night Larry left to wander in the storm? What future does he expect for himself?
6. Was this scene useful in providing closure? Does the reader feel that it might have ended differently?

Chapter 44:

1. Why doesn't Ginny have a telephone installed? What happens when Rose asks her to visit her in the hospital?
2. After she returns to Rose's home, what prompts Ginny to attempt to reach Jess Clark by telephone, and what does she learn/not learn?
3. What remarks does Ginny make to her sister in the hospital? To what does she confess? Do these revelations/attacks seem in character? Are they well-timed? How does Rose respond?
4. What had irritated Rose about Jess Clark? What had prompted Jess to leave? What does she feel about her sister's desertion of her husband?
5. What provision does Rose make for the farm upon her death? What seems her motive?
6. Might she have been expected to make a different decision? In practical terms, will it matter?
7. What assessment does Rose give of her own life? What values are reflected in her remarks?

Chapter 45:

1. How have Rose's daughters fared after her death? Is their relationship to their aunt what she might have hoped?
2. What contrasting attitudes do Caroline and Ginny display as they sort through their parents' goods?
3. Are they courteous to one another? Over what do they quarrel? Do some of Ginny's remarks surprise you? Caroline's?
4. What actions by Rose and Ginny does Caroline resent? Is she at least partly justified? What is Caroline's view of her own relationship with her father?
5. What information does Ginny withhold, and do you think this was right/wise?
6. In the end, what does each woman carry away from her childhood home? What motivates Ginny's decisions regarding household items?
7. What happens to her after she discards the hemlock-saturated sausages?

Epilogue

1. What do we learn has happened to the houses described in the novel? The farms and their legacy?
2. As the book ends, what seem Ginny's final loyalties? Significant memories? What do you make of the final paragraph? What understanding has she gained from her experiences?
3. In your view, is the ending satisfying? Has Ginny been wise in cutting her ties with her past?
4. Is *A Thousand Acres* a good novel? What are its merits? What lessons, if any, about accumulation, work, family life, sexuality, guilt, and other matters does it suggest?
5. Are there any aspects of the situations it presents which the novel leaves out?

6. How would the novel have been drastically different if told from Rose's, Caroline's, or Jess's point of view?

Ref:Online Resources

<https://www.litcharts.com/lit/a-thousand-acres>

<https://myweb.uiowa.edu/fsboos/questions/smileyweb.htm>