

Daughter of the Mountain  
Reading Group Guide

1. The Bilfrey family has lived their whole life on Talon Ridge despite their unhappiness and the lack of opportunities for them. Talk about the reasons why they have faltered, or not tried, to attempt to move away from a place that has caused so much heartache.
2. How did your feelings about Sarah's choice to leave Lottie to be raised by her mother evolve from the start of the novel to the end? As you learn more about Effie and her family's history, do your feelings about her reaction to Sarah's departure change?
3. The theme of nature vs. nurture is considered throughout *Daughter of the Mountain*. Piney is "born low and stayed low." Gene, Frank, and Curtis were all raised by Effie but grow to become wildly different individuals. Are the characters in *Daughter of the Mountain* victims of circumstance or are they able to exercise control over their lives?
4. How does Curtis's relationship with Lottie parallel or differ from his relationship with Sarah? Does he see caring for and helping Lottie learn about her past as a way to "save" Sarah when he couldn't as a younger child?
5. Discuss your opinions of Effie's abilities as a mother. It is clear she cares for her children but struggles to form tender connections. Did she do the best she could have done? Did holding her children at a distance cause their struggles?
6. "A young girl without a mother is like an untethered balloon, bobbing and floating to places unknown and to frightening heights that hold one for too long." Effie and Lottie have both grown up without a mother. How does this commonality connect or divide the two?
7. The power of secrets is a running theme throughout the book. Discuss how each of the characters' secrets defines their lives, shapes their decisions, and how their ability to cope with these secrets determines their futures.
8. Sherry Parnell chooses to set *Daughter of the Mountain* on a "ridge" and not a valley or small town. Talk about how the metaphor of the ridge plays a role in the story.
9. By the end of the novel, do you think Effie has forgiven Sarah? Does she understand her choices by the end of the story? Do you think she forgives herself?
10. Do you think Lottie will make it off of Talon Ridge? Does she have the power to change her life, or will she fall into the generations-long cycles that have controlled her family?