

Suggested Questions for Book Clubs

Below you will find questions book clubs may wish to consider discussing, many of which were mentioned by individuals Suzanne Handler met while researching this story.

1. Can you imagine any scenario wherein a loving parent would take the life of his or her child?
2. Do you believe Sam was temporarily insane at the time he committed the crime to which he freely confessed?
3. Do you think Sam intended to die alongside his child?
If so, why didn't he use both of the remaining bullets in his gun?
4. Do you think Sally went willingly with her father on the morning of her death? If she really wanted to die, why did Sam sign the suicide note for her? How much of her illness, and the nature of life within an asylum, do you think Sally understood?
5. What role does shame play in this story? Do you believe Sam's background as an immigrant influenced his decision in any way?
6. In your opinion, was Sam a hero or a criminal?
7. Do you feel the judge's sentence in this case was appropriate to the crime?
8. Do you think Sam would have served a prison sentence, rather than only probation, had his crime happened today?
9. Do you feel any, or perhaps all, of the Levin family knew what Sam's intentions were on the morning of Sally's death? If so, why did they not stop this event from happening?
10. Do you believe mercy killing is a justifiable act? If so, was it justified in this instance?
11. In what way(s) has medical treatment of the mentally ill improved over the years?
12. Do you think the stigma of mental illness has lessened since the time of Sally's death? If so, in what way(s)?

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