

Discussion Questions for *Splintered Silence* by Susan Furlong

1. The Irish Travellers are looked down upon by the local people, despite the fact that many of them have been settled in America for generations. Why do you believe they are discriminated against? What makes the Irish Travellers different from the settled people?
2. Brynn is torn between two worlds: that of the settled people and her Irish Traveller clan. Her investigative training fits the needs of law enforcement, but she is home to care for her family. Have you ever struggled with a division like this? Is Brynn doing the right thing by working with people who are not of her own background? What do you think is more important—fulfilling your family's expectations or society's?
3. The Irish Travellers are dedicated to clan loyalty. What is your opinion of this? Do you sympathize with the clan's need to look out for their own? How does this sort of loyalty allow issues to fester within the community?
4. When Doogan expresses his prejudice against Mexicans, Brynn thinks, *No matter where a group of people stood in society, they could always find someone else they believed were beneath them.* What similarities do you see between the prejudices the settled community has against the Travellers and how the Travellers feel about the settled people? How much is unfounded prejudice, and how much is legitimate distrust? Was Doogan's prejudice toward Mexicans any different, and why?

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5. Wilco was trained as a military dog and severely maimed while performing his duties. Should animals be used in this way?
6. What is the significance of Wilco in Brynn's life? How does he help Brynn deal with both her emotional and practical issues? In turn, how does Brynn help Wilco?
7. Brynn struggles with PTSD throughout the novel. How does it affect her? How do others react to it? Is there a significant change in her condition by the conclusion? What about Wilco's struggle? Discuss potential ways Brynn and Wilco can tackle their PTSD in future books.
8. Why is Brynn hesitant to help Doogan find his sister at first? Why does she change her mind? Ultimately, do you think she made the right decision to assist Doogan? Did this help or harm her healing process?
9. Drugs are at the heart of this book: the drug trade that destroys lives and the drugs that allow Brynn to survive her past and her injuries. Where do you draw the line between drug therapy and drug abuse? What do you think is the best course of action for returning veterans with chemical dependencies due to PTSD? How did your perception of chemical dependency change throughout the novel?

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10. How does the quote at the beginning of the book apply to Brynn and her inner turmoil?
What are some of the excuses Brynn uses to remain in denial about her drug and alcohol use?
11. Brynn and her Gran have a complicated relationship. Is it ultimately a positive relationship or a negative one? Do you understand why Gran lied to Brynn about her mother? What would you have done in her situation?
12. When Gran describes Mary being in trouble and drinking too much, Brynn thinks, *Like mother, like daughter*. How much of Brynn's troubles do you think are hereditary and how much circumstantial? Do you think Brynn's knowledge of her mother's troubles will help or complicate her own healing?
13. When Brynn learns about the letter from her mother, she excuses Mary's participation in drug dealing by saying, *"Her situation was impossible. A single mother, no support from home, no education, no way out."* Then she thinks, *Excuses, Brynn. Excuses*. What other ways out were there for Mary? Instead of joining the Marines, was there a different way out for Brynn?
14. Gran says, *"I never wanted to hurt you, child. Never. Everything I did, right or wrong, I did out of love for you."* Do you believe it was really love that made Gran lie to Brynn about her mother? Or fear that Brynn might turn out the same way? Or embarrassment

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- she didn't want to face? Have you faced lying to a loved one for a reason you felt was justified?
15. Lies have destroyed Brynn's relationship with her family. How do you think she and Gran can go forward after the lies are revealed? Do you think they can avoid lying to each other in the future?
16. As a young man, Colm turned to the priesthood without explaining to Brynn why he didn't return for her. How do you think it would have changed Brynn's life if she'd known why he abandoned her?
17. Brynn's feelings for Colm (and his feelings for her) are tested as they reunite after all these years. What triggers their feelings to escape into a kiss? How do two people repress their emotions once their lives have taken separate, irreconcilable paths?
18. In reference to her grandfather's callousness about her rape, Father Colm asks Brynn, "*Have you forgiven him?*" Do you think Brynn should forgive her grandfather, or was what he did unforgiveable? What would she gain—or what would her grandfather gain—by her forgiveness?

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19. How does the relationship between Brynn and Sheriff Pusser change throughout the book? What are some defining events that led each to see the other in a new way? Do you feel they use each other in fair or unfair ways?