

Reading Guide

1. Sexual attraction plays a role between Megan and Dom right from the beginning. Do you think their problems would have been solved if they'd had sex, or married? Or would they have struggled anyway?
2. Do you understand why Megan's mother might have stayed with her father, even after the scandal comes out? What parallels does this have with why Matt stays with Megan, even though he knows she's been unfaithful?
3. Megan thinks love makes you vulnerable, and the adult Halley thinks so, too. Do you agree?
4. What motivates Liam to seduce Megan in London? Does it make her easier to manipulate in other ways? Does it make Megan less guilty? What if their genders were reversed?
5. What would you do if you found yourself in Matt's situation – finding out that your partner had been involved in something terrible, in the past? Would you leave them? What would you need them to do for you to stay?
6. Why has Halley been having affairs? What is it about talking with Aidan and Matt that causes her to stop?
7. Why is Benny more self confident by the end of the story? What is the book saying about the impact of parents' feelings and actions on their children, even if they're hidden?
8. Later in the story Halley realizes her version of heaven is where she's living now, and that she hasn't been able to appreciate it, because of her guilt about the past. Have you had an experience of how guilt has clouded you, or forgiveness radically changed things?
9. The war between Great Britain and Northern Ireland is often called The Dirty War. Is Liam's way of fighting particularly dirty, or is all war dirty?
10. Do you think Aidan and Anne will now be able to make a life together?
11. 'The truth is erotic,' thinks Halley, near the end of the book, when she and Matt are making love again. How important do you think the truth is – even if it's difficult – to intimacy?
12. The Cleanskin examines religious sectarian conflict between Protestants and Catholics; and forgiveness, truth and healing are central themes. Is this a book about Christianity, specifically? What is the book saying about religion?