

The Chain by Robin Lamont Discussion Questions

Directions: Answer each question in a complete sentence.
Use evidence from the text to support your responses where necessary.

Chapters 1-2

1. What has Frank done to warrant a meeting with Bloom?
2. Who do you think sent Bloom? Why?
3. Why do you think Frank drinks to excess?
4. What does Alice's comment about the cost of eggs tell you about her and her family?
5. What do Emmet and Frank have in common?

Chapter 3

1. Why do you think the meat industry uses the euphemism “processing” to describe the slaughter of animals?
2. What does Emmet reveal to Frank about Caroline?
3. Neither Frank nor Emmet is happy with the situation at the slaughterhouse, and during their argument at the bar, Emmet suggests that by accepting his promotion, he may be able to improve conditions from within the company. How do the two men’s approaches to fixing the problems at the slaughterhouse differ? Whose approach do you think is more viable? Explain your answer.
4. Why did Jude have plans to meet with Frank?
5. Even if Jude is able to find Frank’s videos, what problem remains?
6. What happened to Jude during her last investigation (into the horseracing industry)? How is this affecting her work on her current investigation into D&M?
7. Jude describes her childhood as “scattered” but recalls a single incident at a truck stop that put her on a path to becoming an investigator. What happened that night?

Chapters 4–5

1. What details on pages 24 and 25 indicate that D&M is not a safe place to work?
2. The pigs from Heritage Farm are crammed into a truck and beaten and shouted at by the driver. How else are they suffering?
3. The pigs from Heritage Farm won't walk down the passageway from the pens to the chute that leads to the stun area. What are the two reasons for this?
4. Why did Verna have to quit her job at D&M?
5. According to Verna, what else was causing Frank stress in the year leading up to his death?
6. Why does Verna suggest that pigs might be more compassionate than humans?
7. What did Sheriff Ward find on Frank's computer? What do his findings suggest?

Chapters 6–8

1. How did Finn get his name?

2. Caroline has a hard time articulating why she's depressed, but the internal monologue on page 52 offers some insight. Based on these details and others from the chapter, what do you think is causing her to obsess over death?

Chapters 9–10

1. What information do the men in the diner offer Jude? What does she ask that suddenly causes them to stop talking?
2. How has Jude been “branded”? Why does Juan approach her outside the diner? Why does he abruptly stop talking to her?
3. Emmet says that the stun station is where accidents happen most often. Why is that?
4. Emmet is confronted by Warshauer, the plant manager, just as he’s about to turn up the voltage on the stun gun. Why does Warshauer stop him? What changes the plant manager’s mind?
5. In his last conversation with Frank, Emmet suggests that by accepting his promotion, he’d be able to improve conditions at D&M from within. But what does he reveal his true plan to be on page 68?

Chapters 11–12

1. What are “downers,” and why does Jude take pictures of them?
2. Why has Marshfield launched a new advertising campaign?
3. What is depicted in the promotional video that Bannerman shows to the board? Have you seen advertisements like this? What do you think of them?
4. How does the scene in Oma Burney’s barn on pages 84 and 85 compare with Jude’s observations from the ridge overlooking the lairage pens?

Chapters 13–15

1. Why does Emmet ask Jude to leave? Why is Alice upset by this?
2. Why does Daniel compare working at D&M to “life inside a prison”?
3. Daniel tells Jude that he’s seen pigs with scrape marks from being dragged and wounds from hooks that are used to pull them. Why doesn’t he report this abuse to management or the USDA inspectors?
4. In addition to being harassed by her coworkers, what threat does Abelina face at her station?
5. Why do you think Daniel and Abelina talk to Jude, even though by doing so, they risk losing their jobs and being deported?

Chapters 16–18

1. Why does Emmet feel conflicted about putting Vernon back at the stun station?
2. In his argument with Pat LaBrie, Emmet explains the fundamental problem with trying to improve conditions at D&M. What is it?
3. In his conversation with Jude at the bar, what does Howard Bisbee mean when he says that “you develop a shield” from working inside a slaughterhouse? What does he say happens to the workers who “can’t switch it on and off like a light”?
4. What do you think Emmet’s scar symbolizes?
5. What does Jude say is the problem with the Humane Slaughter Act? What’s the problem with the USDA workers at the plant, according to her?

Chapters 19–21

1. Marshfield and Hillman start their conversation by talking about a business venture in Bucharest. What does this tell you about their motives?

2. What would the Agriculture Terrorism Bill do? How did Marshfield handle opposition to it?

3. According to Jack, what happened to the creek by the plant? Why does he start singing “America the Beautiful”?

Chapters 22–26

1. In the incident that Emmet describes to Jude in her hotel room involving Vernon and the pregnant pig, why does Warshauer scream at Emmet?
2. How did Caroline manage to get a copy of Frank’s recording? Why was she particularly horrified by the footage?
3. Why are so many of the trailer park residents aware that Abelina has medical training?
4. What do the time stamps on Frank’s footage tell you about the abuse taking place at D&M?
5. What was the “dynamite” footage that Frank recorded?

Chapters 27–30 and Epilogue

1. What does Caroline reveal to Jude just before Jude drops her off at school?
2. As Jude drives out of town, why does she feel conflicted about releasing the footage as she passes all the businesses in town? What does she think is the right thing to do?
3. How does Jude persuade Caroline not to jump off the side of the cliff with the copy of the footage in her hand?
4. What does Emmet mean when he tells the reporter, “There’s even worse damage to the insides of people”?