

Discussion Questions

The Museum of Ordinary People by Mike Gayle

1. Jess decides to put her encyclopedias on display in the Museum of Ordinary People because they symbolize her mother's love and encouragement. Discuss the significance of the other objects that get brought into the museum and which had the most emotional impact.
2. The museum was a breaking point in Jess's relationship with Guy, leading them to go their separate ways. Do you think their breakup was inevitable? Or was the museum the root cause of their separation?
3. What lessons can be taken away from Jess's relationship with Guy? Why is their incompatibility important in the story?
4. What social commentary might the author be trying to make about Jess's race and class, and the trials and tribulations that she had to face as compared to Guy?
5. Before she has a chance to curate the Museum of Ordinary People, Jess often acknowledges that she's not able to follow her dreams. What was holding her back? What finally spurred her to take risks, from quitting her stable job to trying to build the museum from the ground up?
6. Alex and Luce's unrelenting support gives Jess some of the strength and reassurance she needs in curating the museum. Who is your biggest supporter in your life? What would you say to them if they were here?
7. The Museum of Ordinary People is deeply concerned with the preservation of memory. In what ways has the museum acted as a safe haven for its operators and patrons?
8. Paul and Dec act as a comedic and compassionate duo. How have they been a positive influence in the story?
9. Discuss the ways in which grief and hope manifest throughout the narrative. How have each of the characters healed and changed?
10. Luce's parents, Dougie and Maggie, are important parental figures in the story. In what ways is their presence important and impactful?
11. Throughout the course of the novel, there are plenty of friendships that flourish. Which platonic relationships felt the most impactful to the story?

12. Family, both chosen and found, is a recurring theme. In what moment in the novel did you find this to be the most effective or moving?
13. Why does Alex need someone like Jess to help overcome his fears about his scars? Why does Jess need someone like Alex to help curate the museum?

Source: Grand Central Publishing Book Club Kit