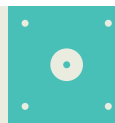
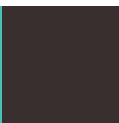
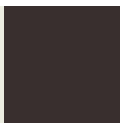


Book Club Questions for *Everything is Fine Here*

1. Psychology would have us know that no two siblings grow up in the same family, despite being raised under the same roof, with exactly the same parents or guardians. In what major ways does Aine's upbringing differ from Mbabazi's? What role does the big age gap play in the sibling's relationship?
2. Why is it, despite the age difference and long periods of separation, that Aine adores her sister Mbabazi almost to the point of being worshipful of her?
3. Initially, Mbabazi introduces Achen to Aine as her roommate. She's embarrassed and apologetic when it becomes clear that Achen has heard lots about Aine, but the reverse isn't true. Why has Mbabazi been reluctant to tell Aine about Achen? Why this introduction now?
4. Someone wrote the words *love is not a potato* in red marker on the ceiling directly above Aine's bunk bed. Aine encounters this phrase every morning upon waking. What's its significance? What does it even mean?
5. In her keynote address at Pike Girls, Mbabazi tells the girls that, "Courage is the ability to look at another woman without judgement or malice (60)." How does this idea play out within the girls' home, where Mama is the source of Mbabazi's marginalization? Is Kaaka Nyirasafari's (the grandmother) intervention through Uncle Nshuti enough to put an end to this familial violence?
6. We encounter Aine Kamara at a time when she's reassessing her lifelong dream of becoming a writer since an opinion piece she had published in a national newspaper was met with backlash both at her school and online. The essay argued that religion should be kept out of schools. Is this a reasonable argument? How might that change affect education and day-to-day life for students?
7. Before leaving Aine's school, Mbabazi swears Aine to secrecy. When her sister returns home, she's not to breathe a word of Achen's existence to Mama, because "What Mama doesn't know can't hurt her. (81)" Is Aine, then, at fault for inviting Achen home to Bigodi?
8. When he picks Aine up from school, Papa expresses his displeasure that Aine didn't call him in over a month, despite having given her plenty of coins for the payphone. He attributes this oversight on his daughter's part to her underdeveloped teenage brain. "You don't think about consequences. How your choices affect other people (86)." Thinking about your own teenage years (or if you happen to have a teenager in your life,) is this a fair assessment of the teenage life?
9. Achen and Aine make an executive decision to withhold news of a close relative's death from Mbabazi, since she wouldn't have made it back home in time for the funeral anyway. Are they justified in making this decision? Putting yourself in Mbabazi's position, how would you respond to this situation?
10. At the funeral in Bigodi, Kaaka Nyirasafari tells Aine a folktale about two sisters, Munguma and Nyangira, who follow the goddess Nyabingi into the heart of the forest to beg the deity to give them their mother back. How does this folk story mirror that of Aine and Mbabazi?



11. On the edge of Magombe swamp, just as Achen is about to tell Aine about a recurring dream, Aine thinks about how impossible it is to capture in words the experience of one's dreams. (147) Are you the sort of person who likes telling others about your dreams, even the ones you don't remember too well? What's behind this human impulse to share dreams?
12. In chapter 11, as she prepares to confront her mother, Aine theorizes that, "perhaps religious fanaticism magnified in people what had existed inside them all along." To your understanding, is this an accurate reflection of religious practices like shunning and excommunication?
13. Aine wonders, "Why was there no word, the equivalent of *orphan* or *widow*, for when you lost your sibling?" Is there a language you know that has this particular noun in its vocabulary?
14. On the night Aine runs away from home, she spends time with Paulo at the wedding anniversary of a bureaucrat in a nearby town. They hit it off, and before boarding the early morning bus to Kampala, Aine promises to call Paulo as soon as she arrives. But she completely forgets about Paulo and never calls him. What do you make of this behaviour on Aine's part?
15. In Kampala, after Mbabazi has had an upsetting phone call from Mama, Achen suggests that "Mothers are by definition a higher power. (257)" What do you make of this assertion?
16. Uncle Shuti is Kaaka Nyirasafaari emissary, sent to reassure Mbabazi and Achen that, "where many people walk, a new path will be cleared." Given this context, do you believe Mbabazi when she says, "Tell Mama that everything is fine here?"
17. In her speech, "Cinderella's Stepsisters" which appears in her 2019 collection *Mouth Full of Blood: Essays, Speeches, Meditations*, Toni Morrison talks about the ways in which women participate in the violent domination of other women. "Mothers who abuse their children are women," Morrison writes, "and another woman, not an agency, has to be willing to stay their hand." In the context of *Everything is Fine Here*, how does Kaaka Nyirasafaari stay Mama's hand? How does Aine?
18. *Everything is Fine Here* is Aine's coming of age story, but her sister's queerness comprises a major tension at the heart of the novel. In what ways do Achen and Mbabazi help shape Aine into the woman she becomes?

