

Foster by Claire Keegan
Summer Assignment Questions

Read the questions below before you begin reading the novella. For each question, write a well-developed paragraph of about 250 words in response. (½ page, single spaced.) Please remember that you are not to consult outside sources or complete with classmates.

How does the story explore the tipping point between child-like ignorance and mature understanding? Are there moments when our narrator is straddling both worlds? Can you find one in the story and discuss it in a detailed paragraph?

When you understand the situation our narrator finds herself in, what did you expect might happen as you read on? In what way did the story's plot set you up to expect one thing but deliver something else? Or, discuss several situations where you expected one outcome, but something unexpected happened instead.

Earlier in the book Kinsella says the line: "Many's the man lost much just because he missed a perfect opportunity to say nothing." On page 90 the narrator says, "This is my mother I am speaking to but I have learned enough, grown enough, to know that what happened is not something I need ever mention. It is my perfect opportunity to say nothing." Why, do you think, does the narrator decide not to answer her mother's question? How has this summer changed her, and in what ways may she have grown?

Sketch out in words what you imagine the narrator's home life with her mother and father to be like. What are the challenges? What is her experience in that household and/or relationship with her actual mother and father?

Choose one longer or several shorter interactions between Kinsella and the girl which you found especially moving. Discuss. What did they do for each other?

Describe Edna's (the wife, the aunt, Mrs. Kinsella, all the same person) relationship with the girl. How is it different from her husband's, and why do you think this might be so? (There's no "right" answer here, just write what you think about it.)

What are your thoughts on a story written with such sparse language? I found it to be a different reading experience from my norm. How did you respond to the bare, minimalistic style? Did you feel differently about the events, or find that you thought or responded differently as you read?