

Reading Group Discussion Questions

1-Before Purslane sets off on her journey, two settings are important to her life: home at the hut and at the festivals. What does each signify and what does Purslane learn or experience at each?

2-Compare Father's interaction with the mayor's daughter and Purslane's with the potato-cake woman. What does each girl need and what does she receive?

3-Narcissism can be roughly defined as self-involvement such that a person disregards the needs of others because they are preoccupied with fantasies of superiority and grandiose confidence in their own successes and talents.

Two of Father's stories illustrate his narcissism: His heroic struggle and victory over the skunk and Alcyone coming to him from the Pleiades to be his wife. In what other ways does he exhibit this character flaw?

4-What does the title of Father's book say about him? (*The Complete Physiognomy of Plants and Their Spiritual and Mystical Relationship with Humans and Other Mammals*)

5-To whom and what does Purslane/Luna look when wondering what having a mother would be like? (At home and at the festivals)

6- What is the role of Alcyone's Dictionary?

7-Motifs and Symbols: How does each support important aspects of the story?

- a. Purslane/Luna writing about herself in the sand/earth. (Opening and ending images)
- b. The puppeteer's foreshadowing
- c. The red canoe (Consider where it takes her.)
- d. The auspicious Comet
- e. Alcyone's dress
- f. The cocoon and the Luna moth

8-What does Purslane/Luna gain or learn with the following encounters?

- a. Lily and Willem
- b. Potato-cake Woman
- c. Bird Woman
- d. Her Mother

9-Self-agency can be described in simple terms as having the ability to make one's own free choices, having a sense of control and/or taking responsibility for one's own life.

At the beginning of the story, Purslane does not have self-agency, but as the story goes on, she shows her strong will and growth of agency. What are several incidents that illustrate this.

10-How does the breaking of Father's elixir bottles become a turning point for Purslane/Luna?

11-How do Lady Magda and Luna's twin Selene complicate Luna's life and how do Luna's previous experiences help her make her final decision?

12-Purslane's father hoped for Purslane's mystical gifts to solve his problems. If her gift to enter portals of dead had emerged earlier, would it have made them rich, as he hoped? Would it have solved his grieving for Alcyone?