



### EARLY ONE MORNING – Questions for Discussion

1. Consider the title of *Early One Morning*. Why do you think Virginia Baily chose to call it this? To which “morning” is she referring?
2. The novel is set in Italy during both World War II and the 1970s. In what ways do these settings color the story? Compare the passages that take place during the war with those that take place after it. Describe some of the differences and their impact on the characters.
3. Why do you think Chiara claims Daniele as her own? Would you have done the same? Have you ever been in a similar situation—of having to quickly make a decision that could have enormous repercussions? If so, what did you do?
4. On page 139, Chiara expresses that “words, as a way of conveying meaning, are overrated.” What does she mean by this? What methods of communication do you think she might prefer?
5. On page 299, we learn how Simone and Chiara came into each other’s lives. Given their history, does their friendship seem an unlikely one? What does Virginia Baily accomplish by showing us the strange circumstances of their friendship so late in the novel?

6. On page 312, Simone tells Chiara that it would be wise for her to prepare herself for Daniele to leave—advice that Chiara initially dismisses as no better than loving him “halfway.” Do you think it is possible to love someone halfway? Have you ever felt, like Simone, that it would be wise to hold love back? Were you able to?
7. Why does Chiara agree to host Maria in Rome? When she hears that Chiara has agreed to put her up, Simone remarks that Chiara is too selfless. What do you think of Simone’s reaction? In helping Maria, is Chiara being purely selfless?
8. On page 345, Chiara decides that, even if she were to go to confession for abandoning Cecilia, “she doesn’t want absolution.” Why do you think this is? Consider the role of confession and forgiveness in the novel. Have there been times in your life when you’ve felt you didn’t want or deserve forgiveness? Did this feeling change?
9. In Italy, Maria feels that there are two versions of herself—the Italian and the English—and she moves back and forth between them. Have you ever had the sensation that there were two coexisting versions of yourself? Look back on a time you found yourself in an unfamiliar place. Did you become a new person?
10. At the novel’s close, Daniele refers to Chiara as his mother and Maria refers to Chiara as her grandmother. Has Chiara replaced their biological mothers / grandmothers? What role has she fulfilled in each of their lives?
11. Compare the Chiara we meet at the beginning of the novel to the Chiara we come to know by the end. Has she undergone significant personal changes over the course of the novel? Do you think that motherhood transforms a person? If so, how?
12. Consider how the novel ends, and what you could imagine transpiring were it to continue. What do you predict will happen next? What might the encounter between Maria and Daniele be like?