

Discussion Questions
In the Shadow of the River
By Ann H. Gabhart

At the beginning of the story, Jacci was very young. Did you like meeting her at this young age? What about her or the scene made her come to life in your imagination?

Jacci's mother, Irena, kept many secrets about Jacci's birth. Do you think she might have told Jacci more when she was older?

Jacci's father and grandfather avoided answering the questions Jacci had about what happened to her mother and why. Do you think they were trying to protect Jacci from the truth or did they avoid giving her answers for other reasons? Do you feel they were right or wrong to evade answering her questions?

Jacci loved the showboat life with her grandfather and the Kingston family. What do you think would be the most fun about living on a showboat? What things might not be as good? As a child? As an adult?

Gabe fell in love with Jacci before he really knew what love was all about, but once they both get older, he's afraid to let her know how he feels. Why do you think he was so hesitant and so fearful that she wouldn't feel the same way toward him?

Since coming aboard the Kingston Floating Palace at the age of five, Jacci has always depended on Gabe for help and support. She has always assumed the feelings she had for him were like those for a brother. What do you think made that change?

Why do you think Gabe was continually telling Jacci he was not her brother? Do you think Jacci should have realized why he kept telling her that?

Duke, Jacci's grandfather, has been on the river as a showman most of his life. Do you think acting can get in one's blood and be an obsession? Is that a necessary trait for an actor, artist, writer, sports figure, or whoever to find success? Does it always lead to success or can it lead to heartache when success eludes a person?

When you hear calliope music, does it put you in a carnival mood? Could that go back to when the showboats liked using the calliope to advertise their shows? Why were the people along the rivers so happy to hear the calliope and so eager to see the show?

Both Jacci and Gabe had moments of jealousy. Have you had times in your life where you had to fight to keep the green-eyed monster (jealousy) from upsetting your life? Do you think Jacci and Gabe handled these feelings in the right way?

Have you ever been to a show on a showboat? Did you enjoy learning more about showboats and how popular they were in their heyday?