



#### Questions for Discussion

1. What do you make of the title? Discuss its significance.
2. Were you surprised by Tom's betrayal of Carolina? Was it a betrayal?
3. Discuss the themes of obligation vs. personal freedom as seen throughout *The Mountain Can Wait*. Tom often does things because "they are what needed to be done." Did you always agree with his assessment of the situation? How is the behavior of various characters in the novel swayed by either obligation or personal freedom?
4. On page 285, when Tom and Curtis are discussing the car accident, Curtis says: "It wasn't ever going to be any different than this...when I hit her, I was in the only place I was meant to be at that second, and so was she." To this, Tom responds, "Well that's a mighty fine way of looking at it. Pretty much absolves you of any responsibility at all." What do you make of both men's assessments? Do you really think Curtis believes that what happened was a result of fate?

5. Discuss the role that nature and landscape play in the novel. How do different characters interact with the land? How are they shaped by the land? Did reading this book make you rethink your connection to nature?
6. Throughout the novel, Tom teaches his children many lessons about nature and wildlife and how we should interact with it. Did any lesson in particular stick with you? How do these lessons translate to other parts of life?
7. Discuss the relationship characters such as Tom, Curtis and Elka had—or have—with their parents, and how that relationship—or lack thereof—influenced their behavior later in life.
8. Did you notice any similarities between Tom and Bobbie? Discuss.
9. When Curtis first tries to tell Tom about the car accident, Tom fails to hear what he is saying, and instead keeps bringing up Tonya's abortion. Do you really think Tom thought that that was what Curtis was trying to discuss? What does this sort of coping mechanism say about Tom's character?
10. On page 170, Tom thinks, "he had done the thing that came most naturally to him—played down whatever it was Curtis was upset about because that's how he, Tom, would have wanted to be treated. Sometimes it was hard to remember that other people didn't go by the rules you set for yourself." Have you experienced this in your life? Does Tom seem to learn from this experience and evolve the way he relates to others because of this revelation?
11. How is Tom's relationship with his daughter Erin shaped by his memories of her mother? In what ways does Elka's legacy bring the two closer and keep them apart?
12. Although Tom is clearly very connected to nature and the land, he also is a man of rules, of order. How do these two facets of his personality come together? Are they ever at odds? What does it mean to you—and how is the fact put to use in the book—that Tom's job is, in some ways, to impose order on nature?
13. Do you think other people—his children, Bobbie, Carolina, Nix, etc.—truly understand Tom?
14. How do you picture Curtis's future? Do you think he will find redemption? Does he deserve redemption?