1. *Into the Fire* is concerned with power, particularly within close relationships. Who do you think holds the power in the relationships depicted between the four main characters?

2. At what point do you think Alice and Lara's friendship began to break down? Was it ever truly a good friendship?

3. What did you think of Alice and Crow's relationship as it progressed through the novel? Did your feelings change by the end?

4. Though the majority of the book follows the chronological story of Alice and Lara's friendship, it is interspersed with the present-tense scenes of Lara during her visit to Crow's place. Why do you think Orchard structured the novel in this manner?

5. While it could be argued that none of the characters in *Into the Fire* are entirely likeable, do you feel there was a true villain? If so, who?

6. *'I didn't realise it at the time but there was a parting of ways between Alice and me at that point, and for me it was Alice who was breaking the oath – the oath of feminism, of our friendship – not me*.' What do you think this book says about feminism and its place in everyday life?

7. How are Alice's and Lara's paths to motherhood different? What, if anything, do you think Orchard is suggesting about the impact that motherhood has on women's lives?

8. '*I stared at the drawing a moment, unsure what to say, embarrassed by my naiveté and earnestness – at the thought that I could have quietly snuck into his interior, poked around, unnoticed, and been able to unravel everything*.' It could be argued that *Into the Fire* is also Lara's attempt to 'poke around' in the interiors of those around her. What do you think this says about her observations and the reliability of her insights?

9. Christian is described twice in the book as 'a good man', though Lara's recollections of him don't always match this description. What do you think makes a good man in the context of this book, and does anyone live up to that ideal?

10. *'We were not the women we once were, and we were the ones who could best bear witness to that change. Sad as it was, it was easier, simply, to look away*.' This books asks how responsible we can and should feel towards others in our lives. Do you think Lara had a duty to intervene in Alice's life?

11. The majority of the plot takes place in Melbourne between 1990 and 2006. What, if anything, do you think ties this story and its characters to such a specific time and place?

12. *'I'd always treated individualism as the pathway to self-actualisation, but now I was beginning to wonder if individualism was actually just the most effective way of shoring up one's place in the pack*.' Lara suggests that her decisions, though they appeared to show independence and individualism, were still made for other people. Do you think her assessment of herself is fair?