

Discussion Questions
to spark conversation and enhance your reading of
THE FLOWER SISTERS by Michelle Collins Anderson
(courtesy of Kensington Publishing Corp.)

1. The novel's prologue, which takes place in a 1928 Ozarks dance hall, introduces us to many characters who still live in Possum Flats when the story picks up in 1978. What are your first impressions of Dash, Violet, Jimmy, Ginger, Hazel and the gang? How did your assessment of any or all of them change throughout the course of the book? Why?
2. As Rose is preparing "The Mayor" for his funeral, she muses "Maybe we can't always be the person we want to be. Maybe not even most of the time." The not-so-secret extramarital affairs didn't align with his upstanding public persona Mayor's. But who else in the novel is not exactly as they appear to be on the outside? Does this cognitive dissonance cause any problems?
3. Rose's position as a small-town female funeral home owner and operator from the 1950s on makes her unique for the times. Even in 1970s Possum Flats, we meet Mabel as a secretary, Betty as a waitress and even Myra — employed as a newspaper editor — is assigned to the more female-focused "society page." Discuss the choices that women had career-wise during this era. Can you relate to the limitations that these women experienced? How do you think this will change for Daisy? What are your hopes for your own daughters and granddaughters?
4. When Daisy bargains her way into a summer internship at *The Possum Flats Picayune*, Rose admonishes her to "Write the truth, but make sure the truths you write are yours to tell." What does she mean by that? Do you think Daisy ends up telling any truths or secrets that she shouldn't? What happens when her stories about the dance hall explosion are printed?
5. Identical twins look alike — but often have extremely different personalities. Are you more of a Rose or a Violet? Did your perception of each sister change or solidify when you discovered the secrets that were revealed in Daisy's final installment?
6. A major theme of THE FLOWER SISTERS is identity. Can we truly choose to be someone other than who we are? By intentionally changing ourselves and our actions, how does that create a ripple effect on those we love and our greater community? For instance, do you feel sympathy for George, who made major life decisions based on misleading information? What about the twins' mother and the loss she grieved?
7. Dash says "Sometimes the punishment doesn't fit the crime, the price too high for that one unthinking moment, one ill-advised decision." This is true for Rose, Violet, Dash, Hazel and Jimmy. Have you ever made a split-second decision that you regretted for years? Or one that changed your life for the better? Can or should people be held accountable for the actions and decisions made by their high school-aged selves? Would you want to be?

8. When Myra teaches Daisy how to write an obituary, she introduces her to a lot of euphemisms for death — like “passed away” or “received his heavenly reward” — which Daisy doesn’t understand: “Why not just say he *died*?” But Myra says the town likes its obits “with a little optimism.” Do you think this language is simply old-fashioned? Or is it a way of avoiding the truth or reality of death? How does this attitude play out in the larger story of the dance hall explosion and its aftermath?
9. Rose says: “I’m a real stickler for getting everything just right with the dead. Sort of helps to make up for what I haven’t been able to put right with the living.” Rose’s personal failures include everything from marriage to parenting to family relationships. Does she get any second chances in the novel? Do you think she can get it right this time? Why or why not?
10. The concepts of “home” and the search for belonging recur throughout the novel. Daisy says, “Maybe home is something you can’t run from, a place you find yourself searching for even after you think you’ve gotten away. You look for it in every town or city, apartment or house — but it’s slippery, shifty. Because home is a *feeling*, and the people and place that inspire that feeling. It’s about their acceptance and your belonging, whether you feel conflicted about that or not; whether they always like you or not.” Do you think home is a physical place? Or is it more of a feeling? Or both? Does Daisy eventually find her home in Possum Flats? Or does Lettie make that impossible for her?
11. Religion plays an important role in the novel. Dash becomes an Assemblies of God preacher as a result of the dance hall explosion. Does he question his beliefs in his old age or become more sure of them? Many Possum Flats citizens thought the explosion was the work of a punitive God. What kinds of sins were being punished? And how did that sense of shame create the shroud of silence and mystery surrounding the blast?
12. “The sun always comes up, making everything new and hopeful. Everyone knows that. The trick is to see the beauty in the dark while you are still in it.” Rose is speaking figuratively about the moonflower vines outside her front door. But can you think of a time when you found a silver lining, something positive or hopeful in the middle of a dark period of your life? How did it change your thinking? Or help you through?
13. The song “At Sundown” was the number the band was playing when the dance hall exploded in Possum Flats — and in the real-life tragedy of the Bond Dance Hall in West Plains, Missouri, in 1928. Can you remember a song that was playing at an important event in your life or in the larger world? How does that song affect you now?
14. Talk about the ending of *THE FLOWER SISTERS*. Did you enjoy the final tour of Possum Flats? How about your slightly unconventional tour guide? What questions do you have about these characters and their futures that have been left unanswered? Are you okay with that?