

Ruby Falls Discussion Questions

1. *Ruby Falls* takes place almost entirely underground. How did the setting contribute to the tension? In what ways do the caves work as a metaphor for the characters themselves?
2. Is the underground setting less confining for the women than for the men? In what way?
3. Ada has endured many losses in life, but she ultimately finds excitement and freedom in the caves. What did you think of her story? Did you relate to her character?"
4. The novel is set during the Great Depression and incorporates real-life history into the story. Did you enjoy the historical fiction aspects? How do you think it would have looked differently if set in modern times?
5. An image of amphibian skeletons, like the salamander and frog, comes up several times. What do you think this symbolizes?
6. After being stuck down below for so long, what were some of the clues that pointed to the group's spiral toward psychosis?
7. How did the varying perspectives further the progression of the novel? Was there a POV that you found particularly enlightening?
8. The majority of the novel is in the caves, with many descriptions of the scenery, including dazzling crystals and the dramatic falls. How did the author use this imagery to manipulate the tone?
9. Do you believe Jeremiah Hagathorn has psychic powers?
10. There's a whole cast of complicated characters on the expedition. Who was your favorite? Who was your least favorite?
11. Late in the novel, Ada has this thought: "Everyone in the entire world is—hurting—everyone—they are all battered and filled with holes." How has loss shaped each of the characters in the caves?
12. "They are, each one of them, a mountain with a thousand rooms inside, some unmappable, and they are not all pleasant, but, God, what creations they are," Ada decides. What do you think—does the novel leave you struck by the ugliness or the beauty of human beings?
13. Were you surprised by Editha's revelation at the end of the novel?
14. Have you ever been to Ruby Falls? Now having read the novel, would you consider going (despite the fictional murder)?