

Seminal Murder

Starting points for discussion

The author would love to read your thoughts on any of the questions below. Please email her at maryvermillion at hotmail dot com.

1. Vermillion presents a range of attitudes about motherhood. At one end of the spectrum, Anne desperately seeks motherhood; at the other end, Mara resolutely shuns it. Is it possible for these two types of women to understand one another? What types of challenges do each face? Where do you fall on the spectrum?
2. How does Zoey impact Mara? What do you make of Zoey's quest to find her "donor dad"?
3. A major theme in *Seminal Murder* is the desire for control. Vermillion explores the control that parents expect to have over their children—be it through a "perfect" sperm donor or a "perfect" diet. The novel's conservative "Christian" characters seek a much darker sort of control as they attempt to define other people's families. When does the desire for control spiral out of control?
4. In depicting Reverend Leo Spires and his daughter Gloria, Vermillion alludes to Phyllis Schlafly, Pat Robertson, James Dobson, and Fred Phelps. How do Vermillion's characters compare to their real-life counterparts?
5. Since Leo Spires and Fred Phelps represent fringe groups, why should a novelist bother with them?
6. Near the novel's end, Mara ponders Spires' motivations. Do you agree with her take on Spires? Do you think it's possible or desirable to understand the motivations of active homophobes?
7. Did *Seminal Murder* impact your beliefs about artificial insemination?
8. Did the killer's identity and/or motivations surprise you? Why or why not?
9. Were there any minor characters that you found particularly interesting or entertaining?
10. What about Mara's love life? Do you think that she and Bridget should stay together? Do you think that Mara and Anne will ever get back together? Do you think they should?