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## Johnston Public Library Book Discussion Questions

### **My Name is Lucy Barton** by Elizabeth Strout

#### Summary

A simple hospital visit becomes a portal to the most tender relationship of all—the one between mother and daughter.

Lucy Barton is recovering slowly from what should have been a simple operation. Her mother, to whom she hasn't spoken for many years, comes to see her.

Gentle gossip about people from Lucy's childhood in Amgash, Illinois, seems to reconnect them, but just below the surface lie the tension and longing that have informed every aspect of Lucy's life: her escape from her troubled family, her desire to become a writer, her marriage, her love for her two daughters.

Knitting this powerful narrative together is the brilliant storytelling voice of Lucy herself: keenly observant, deeply human, and truly unforgettable.

#### Discussion Questions

1. What happened to Lucy that estranged her from her parents? When did you first begin to suspect, then to fully understand Lucy's demons?
2. Describe each of the two women, Lucy and her mother. What is their relationship with one another, and how does the relationship change during the course of the novel?
3. Why is Lucy's mother unable to be emotionally open to her daughter? How different is Lucy's relationship with her own daughters?
4. What is the state of Lucy's marriage? How do the couple's divergent upbringings, one impoverished and the other comfortable, affect their relationship? Talk about the role that class plays in this book.
5. How did you feel, later in the book, when Lucy's dying mother tells her, "I need you to leave" and the father who brutalized her says, "What a good girl you've always been"?

6. What does Strout's book suggest about the pull of family and the power of redemption? What makes forgiveness possible? Do all things deserve forgiveness?

Summary from the publisher  
Discussion Questions from [litlovers.com](http://litlovers.com)