

## Discussion Questions for *Bastard Out of Carolina*

by Dorothy Allison

1. Grandma, Aunts, Uncles, Moms, Dads, Sons, Daughters, Nieces, Nephews, Cousins, not to mention in-laws. Why so many characters? Were they all needed? (**Sarah Barnett**)
2. After Bone's stay with Aunt Ruth, I wondered if Allison was spending too much time building to the rape scene (that was clearly going to occur). I found myself thinking, "Come on already. We know what's going to happen." This is a pacing issue—what reason might Allison have had to move so slowly? How would moving more quickly to this scene have changed the reader's perceptions/feelings about it? (**Lynne Judd**)
3. Bone's voice felt spot on. Her unwillingness to speak of Daddy Glen's behavior, and her feelings that it was her fault and that she was worthless felt accurate, according to what I know of sexual abuse victims through interviews and reading. I appreciated Allison's ability not to make such horrendous treatment melodramatic. This seems important. How did Allison achieve this at the writing level? (**Lynne Judd**)
4. In the afterward which reads like part of the novel, Allison talks about not wanting her book to be an autobiographical novel or a memoir even though her life closely resembles the plot. This was important to her. Let's discuss how she worked to do this and whether the reader thought it mattered.

Here is a quote from Iris Murdoch that relates to my question above: "*I would abominate the idea of putting real people into a novel, not only because I think it's morally questionable, but also because I think it would be terribly dull. I don't want to make a photographic copy of somebody I know. I want to create somebody who never existed, and who is at the same time a plausible person*" (**Judy Wood**)

5. Also related to the afterward, Allison discusses her reasons for treating this part of her life as fiction. She writes: "*I value both (fiction and nonfiction) but genuinely believe that fiction can tell a larger truth.*" Did she achieve her goal of a "larger truth" with this book? (**Sarah Barnett**)
6. How might this tale have read differently if the title had been something like *Bastard Out of Boston*? (**Deborah Baker**)