1. Many of the stories in *The Doll’s Alphabet* are set in uncertain time periods—they could be set in a version of the present day, the early twentieth century, a more general past, or a version of the future. What do these uncertain settings achieve? How does displacing readers in time change the way they experience the story?

2. Gender roles play a big part in these stories, particularly in “Waxy.” Do the confines of how men and women operate and relate to each other in *The Doll’s Alphabet* offer ways for you to think about gender dynamics in the world we live in? How so?

3. Many stories in *The Doll’s Alphabet* feature strong elements of dystopian fiction. Could these stories imagine a possible future, or perhaps an alternative past? Do they gesture toward a moral or a possible cause of their dystopian reality?

4. What do you make of the shortest story in the collection, the title story, “The Doll’s Alphabet”?

5. *The Doll’s Alphabet* has much in common with fairy tales and Franz Kafka, both in its oddness and its sly comedy. In such precarious circumstances, what role does a sense of humor play?
The Doll’s Alphabet was inspired by:

• Edward Gorey, Amphigorey Again
• Barbara Comyns, Sisters by a River
• Georges Perec, Life: A User’s Manual
• T. S. Eliot, The Complete Poems & Plays
• Vladimir Nabokov, Ada, or Ardor
• Samuel Beckett, More Pricks Than Kicks
• Charles Dickens, The Old Curiosity Shop
• Franz Kafka, The Complete Stories
• Günter Grass, Cat and Mouse