

Reader's Guide

Hundred Miles to Nowhere: An Unlikely Love Story by Elisa Korenne

1. Is *Hundred Miles to Nowhere* more a story of finding yourself, choosing a path, having an adventure, or falling in love?
2. Every chapter opens with lyrics from one of Elisa's songs. Did the lyrics help set the stage for each chapter? How? Which lyrics resonated most with you?
3. How was Elisa prejudiced against Minnesota before she arrived? How did that change over time?
4. In Chapter 3 "Being the Artist" Elisa's first impressions of New York Mills include "modest clapboard houses," "a stop sign with a flashing yellow light," "a water tower...with the silhouette of Rodin's thinker perched on a tractor," and "a tiny park nestled along the railroad tracks." She also notices the absence of things she expected: "no traffic lights," "no string of pretty little boutiques," "no pizza place." How would a visitor describe your hometown? What would stand out to them? What would seem to be missing?
5. Contrast Elisa's experience in New York Mills in Chapter 8 "City Girl in the Country" to Chris's experience in New York City in Chapter 12 "Country Boy in the City." How is being a stranger different in New York City and New York Mills?
6. What advice would you give to someone considering a move from New York City to rural America? How about from rural America to New York City?
7. How does place shape identity? What about your hometown has influenced who you are or who you see yourself as?
8. How did Elisa maintain her identity while trying to fit in to small-town life?
9. In Chapter 26 "Paper Ballots," conversation among the election monitors stops when the unfamiliar newcomer Elisa walks in. How does your community interact with outsiders? Are there prejudices that could be overcome?
10. How does the theme of being a fish out of water play out in this book? Name a situation when you felt like a fish out of water. How did you cope?
11. With which supporting character would you most want have lunch? Why?
12. In Chapter 28 "Cursing" former New Yorker Lina says: "There's always more to do for the museum than I can get done," perhaps demonstrating more of an urban tendency than a rural one. Are you the same person no matter where you are? Or does where you live affect who you are?
13. Assume Chris and Elisa are asking you for relationship advice. How would your advice to them change from the beginning of the book to the end of the book?
14. In Chapter 32 "The Minnesota Horah" Chris and Elisa's wedding showcases the differences between the bride's guests and the groom's guests. What were the most significant differences between the two sets of guests? Did you notice any similarities?

15. Did your opinion of Elisa change from the beginning of the book to the end of the book? How and why?
16. In Chapter 36 “Hunting Season” Elisa wrote, “The city energized me like a battery... Country life wore me down like water on a rock-face.” Which places and experiences energize you? Which wear you down?
17. In Chapter 38 “Jerome’s Death” Elisa poignantly describes being at the deathbed of her friend as a “privilege.” Have you ever had a similarly terrible experience that was also a privilege?
18. In Chapter 42 “Losing Home” Elisa writes fondly of her first sniff of some of the less-than-pleasant scents of New York City: “sharp scent of car exhaust, yeasty whiff of freshly baked pizza, ugly-sweet funk of rotting garbage. I had made it.” What is it about the sense of home that transforms what might be annoying into something charming?
19. Elisa’s first sense of home in the Midwest is her connection to Chris in Chapter 20 “Once Upon a Time in the Vanagon.” When Elisa first returns to New York City it no longer feels like home, and it takes a tornado before Minnesota can begin to feel like home for her. What defines home for you? Can home be something other than a place? What needs to happen before your relationship to a place can change?
20. Which themes in *Hundred Miles to Nowhere* are universal to readers? Which themes would be most relevant to Minnesotans or New Yorkers?