



Reader's Guide for *Tiny Little Earthquakes*

by Hays Blinckmann

A Note from Hays

Families are funny—until they’re not. Then they’re tragic, absurd, and somehow still the place we keep returning to for answers. *Tiny Little Earthquakes* grew out of that truth. It’s about the tiny fractures that become fault lines, and how we learn to live on shaky ground.

These questions are meant to spark conversation, confession, and yes, hopefully, a little laughter. There are no right answers—just honest ones. Someone better have brought snacks.

— Hays

1. The Fault Lines of Family

Elliot’s family is a cocktail of dysfunction, denial, and devotion. Which relationships felt the most real to you—and which made you want to run screaming?

2. Generational Tremors

How do the patterns between mothers and daughters repeat (or evolve) across the story—from Grandma to Elliot’s mother to Elliot herself? Can anyone ever really “break the cycle”?

3. Survival, or Just Coping?

Throughout the book, Elliot learns to survive in different emotional climates—chaos, guilt, love, loss. Which coping mechanisms felt familiar or even uncomfortably relatable?

4. The Vineyard and the Void

The farm, Martha’s Vineyard, Cincinnati, and boarding school each represent different versions of Elliot’s identity. How does geography shape her growth—or her ability to escape?

5. Love Languages (and Other Foreign Tongues)

How do the characters express love—through caretaking, control, manipulation, or silence? How do you feel about the sisterly bond between Elliot and Poppy? What does Elliot learn about what *healthy* love might look like?

6. The Weight of Secrets

Everyone in this novel is hiding something—from addiction to shame to the truth about family. Which secret hit hardest, and did the reveal feel like freedom or another fracture?

7. Coming of Age in a Minefield

Elliot's coming-of-age isn't about innocence lost; it's about resilience gained. How does her definition of "home" or "safety" evolve by the end of the novel?

8. The Humor in the Hurt

Dark humor threads through even the most painful scenes. Did the moments of wit or absurdity make the story more bearable—or did they sharpen the heartbreak?

9. Mothers, Daughters, and the Art of Forgiving the Unforgivable

By the end, does Elliot truly forgive her mother, or does she simply understand her? Is understanding the same as forgiveness?

10. The Title: Tiny, Little Earthquakes

Why do you think the author chose this title? What are the "tiny earthquakes" in your own life—the subtle shifts that changed everything?

Bonus for Book Clubs

If your group could invite one character to join your discussion, who would it be—and what's the first question you'd ask them?