

Strides Between Us — 25 Discussion Questions

1. How does Jake's identity as a runner shape his decisions before and after the injury?
2. In what ways does losing his physical ability impact his sense of self-worth?
3. How does the novel portray athletic culture's pressure to push through pain?
4. What does the final race reveal about Jake's transformation?
5. What moments show the gradual decline that leads Jake into homelessness?
6. How does the novel challenge stereotypes about people experiencing homelessness?
7. What role does pride play in Jake's refusal to ask for help?
8. How does Jake's environment reflect his internal emotional state?
9. What breaks down between Jake and Paige—and what still connects them?
10. How does Emily symbolize both Jake's past and his hope for the future?
11. What does the reunion moment at the race reveal about unconditional love?
12. What does Dolce represent to Jake during his darkest years?
13. How does the memory of Dolce connect Jake to Coach, his past, and his lost potential?
14. Why is Dolce's brief reappearance such a powerful turning point for Jake?
15. How does Coach Roberts shape Jake's understanding of discipline, identity, and resilience?
16. Why does Jake avoid Coach's funeral, and what does this reveal about guilt and denial?
17. What is the emotional impact of hearing Coach's voice years later?
18. Is Mitch a villain, a rival, or something more complicated?
19. How does Mitch's success influence Jake's view of himself?
20. Why is the ending between Jake and Mitch respectful rather than hostile?
21. How do Mitch's parents act as stabilizing forces for Paige and Emily?
22. What contrast does Mitch's family create with Jake's isolation?
23. How might Jake's life have been different if he had a similar support system?

24. What does Jake's return to running symbolize beyond athletics?

25. How does the ending redefine the idea of 'winning' in Jake's life?