

QUESTIONS ABOUT  
*GOODBYE, VITAMINS*  
Part 3

This book is about a young woman (Ruth) who returns home to help her mother (Annie) care for the Ruth's father (Howard) who has Alzheimer's. Ruth has just been dumped by her boyfriend and is terrified of any more losses.

The questions below cover journal entries from May 24 to the end (pp 130 – 194) .

May 28 - 30

1. Ruth writes that the reasons we care for people often have nothing to do with the person cared for. Is this true or not? Give examples.
2. Annie is angry at Howard because he has girlfriends, but when the police bring him home confused and pantsless, what does she do? Why is her love (or is it compassion only) greater than her anger?

June 1 – 5

3. During her vacation in Mexico, when was Annie happiest? Is this true for us?

June 6 - 28

4. In this section we find mostly little "in the moment" observations Ruth makes about her life. What are some of these observations?

June 29 - 30

5. How do Theo (Howard's student) and Ruth each ask the question, "What's wrong with me?" in this section.

July 4

6. Theo and Ruth agree to show each other photos of their exes. What does Theo's picture show? What does Ruth's?

July 5 – 9

7. What does Ruth throw in the fountain? Why?
8. Does Ruth want a relationship with Theo? What is she afraid of?
9. Howard shows great love for Ruth through his own writings, but we never see him telling her he loves her. Do you believe we can feel love if it is left unexpressed?

July 11

10. How is Alzheimer's disease like being in a box?

## August

11. While Howard continues to lose his memory, Ruth dreams about this memory loss. How is this loss shown in her dreams?

## September

12. How is preparing a home for an Alzheimer's victim like preparing a home for a small child? Name some of the things the family does.

## October

13. Name at least five activities Ruth does in October. Do these activities have anything in common?

## November

14. Why does Ruth want to get drunk with Theo?
15. On page 181 a stranger comments, "But times end." What are some things that are ending or will end for Ruth?
16. What do Theo and Ruth do at the end of their evening? Does Ruth do it well?
17. On page 184 we read, "... *it didn't matter what you remembered or didn't, and the remembering—it occurred to me—was irrelevant. All that mattered was that the day was nice—was what it was.*" How does this apply to Howard? To Ruth? What is it that matters to us?
18. On page 185 Howard talks about "crucified vegetables" when he means "cruciferous" vegetables. On page 187 he forgets the name of his wife, and on the same page he substitutes "exoskeleton" for "seashell." These are typical signs of early Alzheimer's. Do we who presumably don't have Alzheimer's ever make these same mistakes? If we make such mistakes, do we worry that we might have Alzheimer's?
19. On page 191 Ruth pulls Theo close to her, looks into his eyes, and asks him what he sees. He does not answer immediately. What does she want him to see? Does he see it?
20. The last paragraph of the book reads, "*I copy," you say, then "Over and out," and all of us follow your lead, one after the other, into the darkness: over and over and over. Out, out, out.*" These are walkie-talkie terms they are practicing with their new walkie-talkies. What do you think Ruth is thinking when she ends her journal this way? In what way will all eventually follow Howard's lead?
21. This book is about loss and how to live with it. Does *Goodbye, Vitamins* leave you feeling good? Or not?