

Discussion Questions for *The Sweetness at the Bottom of the Pie* by Alan Bradley

(Most questions taken or adapted from <http://www.randomhouse.com/book/17186/the-sweetness-at-the-bottom-of-the-pie-by-alan-bradley>)

1. What do you think of the title and book cover? Are they good choices? What's the meaning of the title?
2. With her high level of knowledge, her erudition and her self-reliance, Flavia hardly seems your typical eleven-year-old girl. Or does she? How does Flavia's personality drive the novel?
3. *The Sweetness at the Bottom of the Pie* falls within the tradition of English country house mysteries, but with the devilishly intelligent Flavia racing around Bishop's Lacey on her bike instead of the expected older woman ferreting out the truth by chatting with her fellow villagers. Are you a fan of cozy mysteries? Did you like the twists the author put on the genre?
4. Do you have a favorite scene from *The Sweetness at the Bottom of the Pie*?
5. With her excessive interest in poisons and revenge, it's no surprise that Flavia is fascinated, not scared, as she watches the stranger die in her garden. In your view, is her dark matter-of-factness more refreshing or disturbing?
6. Flavia reminds us often about Harriet, the mother she never knew, and has many keepsakes that help her imagine what she was like. How has the missing Harriet shaped Flavia's personality?
7. Flavia's distance from her father, the Colonel, is obvious, yet she loves him all the same. How does their relationship develop over the course of the story?
8. Buckshaw, the estate, is almost a character in its own right, with its overlarge wings, hidden laboratory, and pinched front gates. How do Buckshaw and the setting of the novel function in the story?
9. Like any scientist, Flavia expects her world to obey certain rules, and she seems to be thrown off kilter when surprises occur. How much does she rely on the predictability of those around her, like her father and her sisters, in order to pursue her own interests (like solving the murder)?
10. Did you find the characters believable? Which of the characters did you like the most? Which did you dislike?
11. Did you find the dialog in the story realistic?
12. What did you think of the plot line development? How credible did the author make the plot?
13. Any comments about the way the book ended?
14. Are there questions you would like to ask or additional comments you would like to make?