

Book Club Discussion Questions

*Ripiro Beach: A Memoir of Life After Near Death*  
By Caroline Barron

1. What is the significance of the title, *Ripiro Beach*, to the greater story?
2. The book opens with a graphic near-death scene. Why did Barron choose this and how does it relate to the rest of the story?
3. In Chapter 2 Barron's response to her mother's research about Dave's birth family was: 'It's got nothing to do with me.' Why did she respond this way, and how did this change over time?
4. Throughout the book Barron seeks out various health professionals for a diagnosis to her brain fog and anger. Have you felt that way? Why was it so difficult for her to get a diagnosis? What could health professionals do differently?
5. Barron writes in Chapter 8 that the "— external and the internal — have somehow become connected." What does she mean by that?
6. There are many shocking discoveries in Barron's family history, but also some silver linings. What are they?
7. The question of nature versus nurture weaves through the book. What makes us *us*? Is nature more impactful than nurture?
8. Why does Barron describe being filled with hope when she begins finding out about her father's birth family. How is she disappointed? How does this affect her health?
9. DNA and characteristics are passed from both parents. Why has Barron focused on her father's side of the family here? What does she risk by doing so?
10. When Barron discovers she is Māori she struggles with integrating it into her world and self. What makes someone a particular ethnicity? What are the parameters? Who has the right to use a specific ethnic label?
11. Barron peppers the book with literary and musical quotes to illuminate what she feels or thinks. How does this help your understanding of the greater work?
12. Why does Barron write in Chapter 12 that it feels 'as through history and I are in cahoots'? What are some examples of the story wanting to be told?
13. Both Barron and Stephen Stanaway initially hid that they knew where Montague had died. Why do you think they did that, and would you have handled it any differently?
14. What is the significance of the R D Laing quote: 'I feel rocked by waves of hundreds of years'?
15. How does Caro's death affect Barron? What happens to Barron at the memorial service and why?
16. In Chapter 31 Barron writes that she has 'finally realised what God is to me'. What is God to you?
17. Barron experiences an uncanny sense of connection to Ripiro Beach and the greater Northland region when she and her husband are searching for a holiday home. How important is place *to Ripiro Beach* and to Barron herself?
18. Why didn't Barron share her mental health journey with her mother?
19. How does Barron's fear of death intensify throughout the book, and how does she eventually address it?
20. The book ends on a hopeful note. Do you think we ever truly get over traumatic experiences?