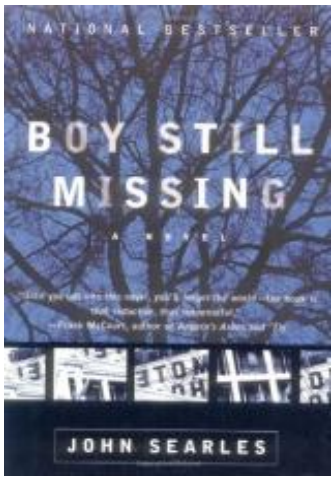
Boy Still Missing

by John Searles



About the Book

The widely acclaimed debut novel from John Searles is a brilliant coming-of-age novel about 15 year-old Dominick Pindle, whose troubled journey is shaped by, and influences, the social and political struggles of the early 1970s.

It is June 1971 and Dominick Pindle, a tenderhearted but aimless Massachusetts teenager, spends his nights driving around with his mother and dragging his wayward father out of bars. Late one evening Dominick's search puts him face-to-face with his father's seductive mistress, Edie Kramer. Instantly bewitched, he begins a forbidden relationship with this beautiful, mysterious woman. Before long, though, their erotic entanglement leads to a shocking death, and Dominick discovers that the mother he betrayed had secrets as dark and destructive as his own.

Charged with the exhilarating narrative pace of a thriller and set during a complicated and explosive era, **Boy Still Missing** renders a deeply affecting portrait of a boy caught in an intimate and taut family drama that brings the explosive issues of a complicated era -- class upheaval, abortion rights and the dissolution of the American family -- into razor-sharp focus.

Discussion Guide

1. Describe the relationship between Dominick and his mother in the early chapters of the book. In what way does Dominick "flip-flop" between identifying with his mother and father? How does this role in the family affect his attitude about the world around him?

2. Edie Kramer's sexual appeal is an obvious lure for Dominick, but what else about her draws him into this forbidden relationship?

3. At the police auction in chapter two, Dominick says, "it was as if Edie's kiss had aged me ten years, and I saw my mother in a different way." What about that kiss made him change his view of his mother?

4. Throughout the novel, Dominick considers the way Leon and his father would deal with various situations; often their behavior goes against his instincts. How does their definition of manhood differ from the way Dominick views his male identity by the end of the story?

5. What is the significance of Leon's mini-suicide notes in relation to the short note Dominick writes to his father on Page 136, telling him goodbye?

6. Discuss the symbolism of the cardinal hats that Dominick sees in Saint Patrick's Cathedral and the recurrent images of red balloons throughout the book.

7. Do you believe the appearances of Dominick's mother in the motel and the pond were actual apparitions or just figments of Dominick's imagination?

8. The novel is set immediately preceding the time of the Roe v. Wade decision and one could argue that the tragedy of Terry Pindle's life states a case for abortion, while others might feel that this tale presents an argument against abortion. Which side of this issue do you think the story supports and why?

9. What was the ultimate life lesson Dominick learned in this coming-of-age journey? How did he triumph? How did his actions "free" his mother?

10. When Dominick finally sees Truman in the last seen of the book, he states: "Ever since the day I'd been told who he was, I pictured him as one of flawless, blue-blazered kids I'd seen streaming from that school on the Upper East Side. But when our eyes met, I felt as if I was looking at a version of myself; or rather the young man I might have become had none of this happened. Ordinary. Innocent enough. And all at once I saw that there was some sort of magic in that ordinariness. A magic I no longer had." What do you think this description and this moment signifies? What does Dominick mean when he talks about a magic he no longer has?

11. The title **Boy Still Missing** appears throughout the book, first as a headline from a newspaper about Truman, then as a headline about Dominick, and finally as a description that the adult Dominick uses to describe himself as he reflects on his life. Discuss the significance of the title **Boy Still Missing** as well as various definitions in relation to this story.

Author Bio

John Searles is a *New York Times* bestselling and award-winning author of four novels. His books have been published in over a dozen languages and have been voted ?Best of the Year? or top picks by *Boston Globe*, *Entertainment Weekly*, *Salon* and the American Library Association. A frequent contributor to *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, John was a top editor at *Cosmopolitan* for two decades, first hired by Helen Gurley Brown.

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