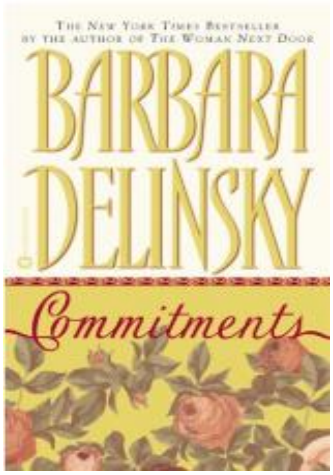
ReadingGroupGuides
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Commitments

by Barbara Delinsky



About the Book

On her Manhattan rooftop terrace, elegant Sabrina Stone looks like a society wife, except for the handicapped child in her arms. She speaks with investigative reporter Derek McGill for only a few minutes; it is long enough to tell her all she needs to know about this caring man. Sabrina next meets Derek in a maximum security prison-after he is convicted of murder. She comes to tell him she believes in his innocence, and finds him a man hardened by experience yet one who still loves her and her son But to commit herself Sabrina must finally end her marriage?and begin a fight for a man's freedom that holds no guarantees, only the promise of fulfilling all of their dreams.

Discussion Guide

1. The idea of "commitment" recurs often in this novel. How would you define a commitment and what examples are found in the novel? What would you say is your greatest commitment and how has living up to it affected your life?

2. Our first introduction to Sabrina is through Derek?s eyes at the beginning of the novel. He is surprised at how serene she looks while standing on the terrace. What stereotypes are his initial assumptions based on? What causes him to change his mind? This meeting between them is brief but leaves impressions on them both. What do we learn about Derek and Sabrina from their visit, and what does each one offer the other?

3. Though a woman of privilege with a seemingly idyllic life, Sabrina is extremely unhappy and lost. When visiting different institutions for Nicky, she stops at the Parkersville prison to visit Derek McGill. Why does she do this? What from their initial and only visit eighteen months prior is she trying to regain? Why do you think Derek reacts the way he does to her presence in the jailhouse?

4. Sabrina comes from a family of fiction writers who seem to live within the fantasy worlds they write about. How did growing up in this environment shape Sabrina? Does she ever allow herself to fantasize, and if so, when and about what

in particular? Who else seems to be living a fantasy and is starkly unwilling to face the truth?

5. Despite her struggle to be a good mother, Sabrina finds herself falling short of her ideal. She admits to feelings of failure and sees herself through her husband?s eyes as an unfit mother. If you were a mother in Sabrina?s situation, how would you face the fact that your child is handicapped? How do you feel about Sabrina?s admission to Derek that she had wished Nicky were dead? Do you think Sabrina?s decision to send Nicky to an institution was for his own good or more for her sake?

6. Derek overcomes his fear of writing to exchange letters with Sabrina before his release. What reason would the author have to choose this form of communication between these characters? What is shown in their letters that is not reflected in their conversations? Do you think writing is an easier form of communication than speaking face-to-face? Why or why not?

7.After his release from Parkersville, Derek finally tells Sabrina about the night of the murder and the players involved in his conviction. Derek also makes it clear to Sabrina that he wants nothing more than to punish those responsible for taking away two years of his life. How does his strong need for revenge affect Sabrina? Is his hatred warranted?

8. While Derek hunts for the files that will prove his innocence, Sabrina seems distant and ill. What is she wor-ried about? Are her concerns unfounded? What does she discover about herself and the source of her illness?

9.J.B. appears to be concerned about Sabrina?s marriage to Derek and decides to move into the barn to keep an eye on them. Why does Derek originally feel threatened by J.B.?s appearance? What is it about Derek that causes Sabrina?s family to be concerned? Why do you think her family is able to be realistic now? Is it fair of them to believe that Sabrina is the one living in a fantasy?

10. There are times when Derek and Sabrina struggle to deal with the idea of family. Derek hints at his past and his relationship with his father, while Sabrina shows how her family was eccentric and how she feels she has failed at her only attempt at creating a family. How do Derek and Sabrina come to terms with the idea of family? What does the idea of family represent to each of them, and how are their perceptions reflected in what they expect from each other?

Author Bio

Barbara Delinsky is the author of more than 20 *New York Times* bestselling books, including BEFORE AND AGAIN, THE SCENT OF JASMINE and LOVE SONGS. She has been published in 28 languages worldwide. A lifelong New Englander, Delinsky earned a B.A. in psychology at Tufts University and an M.A. in sociology at Boston College. She lives in Massachusetts with her husband, more books than she'll ever be able to read, two tennis racquets, and enough electronic devices to keep in close touch with her children and their families.

Critical Praise

"An excellent storyteller."

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