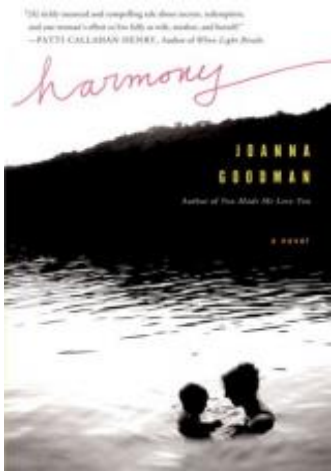
ReadingGroupGuides
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Harmony

by Joanna Goodman



About the Book

New mom Anne Mahroum is blessed with a loving husband, a comfortable life, and a brand-new baby. But she isn't entirely happy. For one thing, she's having trouble adjusting to the fact that her son, Evan, was born "imperfect," with club feet. Filled with shame and feeling like a terrible mother, Anne begins to obsess about her own mother, who mysteriously whisked Anne away from her birthplace when she was a young girl-and still refuses to say why. Longing to meet her father and family, Anne determines to unearth the truth about her past. But she never suspects that the truth may be more than she really wants to know.

Discussion Guide

1. Harmony is about a woman who is also a wife, mother, and daughter. She is trying to remain true to herself while also being the best she can be in those many other roles. Do you find Anne believable, sympathetic and likeable? Why or why not?

2. Anne's son Evan is imperfect because he has club feet, but all children are imperfect in some way. Discuss how your own mother dealt with your imperfections. Discuss how you, as a mother, deal with your children's imperfections. In what ways is your experience similar to, or different from, what Anne goes through?

3. Anne is ambivalent about the support group she attends, often needing it yet also distaining it. Compare that to your own experience of support groups, whatever they might be.

4. Anne's husband Elie is not always perfectly supportivehelping out in some areas of domestic life and child care, not helping out in others; sometimes sympathizing with Anne's emotional turmoil, often becoming exasperated with her. In what ways do you find him typical of husbands, and in what ways is he very different? Do you like him?

5. Anne is attracted to another man in her support groupDeclan Gray. Why is she drawn to him? Do you find the author's depiction of this relationship realistic? Does it change how you feel about Anne?

6. Becoming a mother creates a need in Anne to know more about her own origins. Whether or not you are a mother, have you ever felt a sudden need to know more about your family background? Were there secrets in your family's past that you wanted to uncover?

7. Anne's mother keeps secret from her daughter the full truth about where they originally came from and the circumstances under which they left the small town of Harmony. Did you find her revelation shocking? Do you admire her for leaving and starting a new life for herself? Would you have made the same choice?

8. As many parents do, Jean makes a tremendous sacrifice for her daughter. Do you think Jean considers her sacrifice worthwhile? Is Anne grateful enough? What is a child's obligation toward the parent who gives up so much for them?

Author Bio

Joanna Goodman is the author of six novels, including the #1 national bestseller THE HOME FOR UNWANTED GIRLS, which was on *The Globe & Mail*?s Fiction bestseller list for more than six months, as well as THE FORGOTTEN DAUGHTER and THE FINISHING SCHOOL, both national bestsellers. Her stories have appeared in *The Fiddlehead, B & A Fiction, Event, The New Quarterly* and *White Wall Review*, as well as excerpted in Elisabeth Harvor?s fiction anthology A ROOM AT THE HEART OF THINGS.

Originally from Montreal, Joanna now lives in Toronto with her husband and two kids.

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