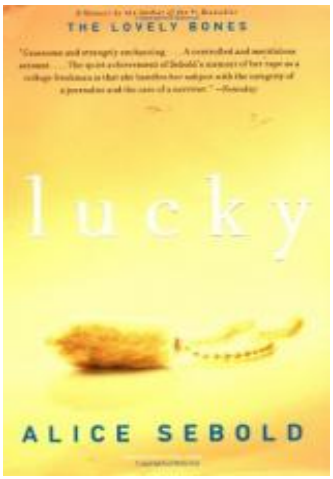
ReadingGroupGuides
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Lucky

by Alice Sebold



About the Book

A memoir by the author of the #1 bestseller **The Lovely Bones**

In a memoir hailed for its searing candor and wit, Alice Sebold reveals how her life was utterly transformed when, as a nineteen-year-old college freshman, she was brutally raped and beaten in a park near campus. What propels this chronicle of her recovery is Alice's indomitable spirit?as she struggles for understanding ("After telling the hard facts to anyone, from lover to friend, I have changed in their eyes"); as her dazed family and friends sometimes bungle their efforts to provide comfort and support; and as, ultimately, she triumphs, managing through grit and coincidence to help secure her attacker's arrest and conviction. In a narrative by turns disturbing, thrilling, and inspiring, Alice Sebold illuminates the experience of trauma victims even as she imparts wisdom profoundly hard-won: "You save yourself or you remain unsaved."

Discussion Guide

1. The man who raped Alice was by turns brutal, bullying, concerned, and contrite. Discuss Alice's responses to him in the course of the rape. Can you understand why, when the rapist demanded that she kiss him back, Alice obliged?

2. Alice mentions at one point that she and her sister were "raised in a house where my mother's problems provided the glue of family" (page 162). Discuss the Sebold household and the effect of Alice's rape on its various members. In what ways did Alice's family provide the support she needed in the aftermath of the rape?

3. "I was learning that no one -females included -knew what to do with a rape victim" (page 78). Discuss the diverse reactions of Alice's friends and classmates to her rape. In general, who was more sympathetic, more understanding, more com-passionate -the women or the men?

4. Discuss the significance of the clothing Alice wears at critical points in her story. For example, why did it matter that Alice was wearing a cardigan and oxford-cloth shirt when she was attacked? A loose blouse, old jeans, and no underwear on her first visit to the Public Safety Building? Nude hose (borrowed) at the grand jury hearing? A red, white, and blue outfit at the trial? Does it seem reasonable to you that people would judge a rape victim on the basis of her attire?

5. What role does race play in Alice's story? How might the rape and its aftermath have been different -for Alice, her family, and her friends -if the rapist had not been black?

6. How would you characterize Alice's relationship with her sister? What effect did Alice's rape have on their relationship? Do you think Alice and Mary were closer before the rape or after? Why?

7. Imagine yourself in Alice's shoes that October afternoon on Marshall Street in Syracuse -the day Alice found herself face to face with her attacker for the first time since the rape. Would your reaction have been different from Alice's? Since there was a police officer nearby, might you have approached him immediately?

8. "You could not be filled with hate and be beautiful" (page 101). Discuss "Conviction," the poem that Alice wrote in Tess Gallagher's workshop, and the reactions it elicited.

9. Discuss Alice's failure to identify Gregory Madison in the police lineup. Does it seem fair to you that he was able to enlist a lookalike friend to frighten and intimidate Alice? Is it fair that, as Alice's lawyer puts it, "Rights are weighted on the side of the defendant" (page 140)?

10. What role does Alice's virginity play in her story? If she had been sexually active before the rape, might recovery have been easier? At the trial, was Alice's virginity a factor in securing Gregory Madison's conviction?

11. Discuss Alice's response to Lila's rape. Why did the rape destroy their friendship?

12. "It is not just forcible intercourse; rape means to inhabit and destroy everything" (page 123). Discuss how this statement applies in Alice's own case.

13. If the members of your reading group have also read **The Lovely Bones**, try to identify elements of Alice Sebold's own story that resonate in her fiction.

Author Bio

Alice Sebold is the author of the memoir LUCKY and the bestseller THE LOVELY BONES. She has been chosen by the *Village Voice* as a Writer on the Verge and has written for the *New York Times* and the *Chicago Tribune*. She lives in California with her husband, Glen David Gold.

Critical Praise

"Sharp-eyed and unsentimental....Despite its disturbing subject, **Lucky** is exhilarating to read."

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