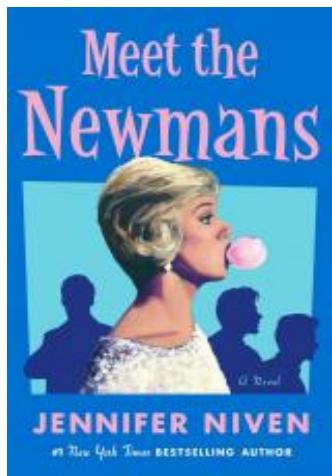


## Meet the Newmans

by Jennifer Niven



### About the Book

From #1 *New York Times* bestselling author Jennifer Niven, a novel about America's favorite TV family, whose perfect façade cracks, for fans of **LESSONS IN CHEMISTRY** and **THE SEVEN HUSBANDS OF EVELYN HUGO**.

For two decades, Del and Dinah Newman and their sons, Guy and Shep, have ruled television as America's Favorite Family. Millions of viewers tune in every week to watch them play flawless, black-and-white versions of themselves. But now it's 1964, and the Newmans' idealized apple-pie perfection suddenly feels woefully out of touch. Ratings are in free fall, as are the Newmans themselves. Del is keeping an explosive secret from his wife, and Dinah is slowly going numb --- literally. Steady, stable Guy is hiding the truth about his love life, and the charmed luck of rock 'n' roll idol Shep may have finally run out.

When Del --- the creative motor behind the show --- is in a mysterious car accident, Dinah decides to take matters into her own hands. She hires Juliet Dunne, an outspoken, impassioned young reporter, to help her write the final episode. But Dinah and Juliet have wildly different perspectives about what it means to be a woman, and a family, in 1964. Can the Newmans hold it together to change television history? Or will they be canceled before they ever have the chance?

Funny, bighearted and deeply moving, **MEET THE NEWMANS** is a rich family story about the dual lives we lead. Because even when our lives aren't televised weekly, we all have a behind-the-scenes.

### Discussion Guide

- 1.** The book often shows the members of the Newman family struggling to remain in character both on camera and off. Whose struggle felt the most interesting to you? In what ways are the Newman family members similar or dissimilar to their on-screen personas?
- 2.** MEET THE NEWMANS is a multi-POV novel that shows the perspectives of each member of the family and several other characters. What effect did this have on you as a reader, and whose perspective did you find the most interesting?
- 3.** The novel has Dinah's magazine articles and interviews scattered throughout. How do you feel that these pieces of media give cultural and political context to the time the story is set?
- 4.** What do you think about the conversation among Dinah, Juliet and the other women about the limitations of Betty Friedan's message and writing? Do you agree that because Friedan's writing leaves out certain groups --- such as Black women and unmarried women --- it is not as effective as feminist literature?
- 5.** The book often shows both Shep and Guy struggling with familial expectations. At one point Shep notes that when he is in tough emotional situations, he delivers his lines as though he is on camera. In another scene, Guy admits to Kelly that a part of him was relieved when his father was in a coma. How did each brother handle family stress, and what point do you think the book is making about parental expectations?
- 6.** Discuss Guy and Kelly's relationship. In what ways do you think the difficulties for LGBTQ performers are different now than they were in the 1950s, and in what ways do you think certain issues have continued?
- 7.** In some ways, Shep is quite similar to his father, Del: He is an artist and is poised to have his first kid rather young. Do you think Shep is worried about becoming his father? How do you think Del's example haunts Shep's thoughts about his impending fatherhood?
- 8.** What do you think about Dinah and Juliet's relationship? In what ways does their intergenerational friendship help them as creative partners, and in what ways does the generational gap hinder their relationship?
- 9.** Both Dinah and Juliet yearn to use their creative fields --- television and journalism, respectively --- to educate people about gender equality. In what ways do you think the media and culture can both uphold the status quo and disrupt it?
- 10.** Consider Dinah's revelation that she is living a ?half-life? --- that being a wife and mother are her entire identity, and she does not have her own intrinsic sense of self or purpose. Do you feel like Dinah became more satisfied with her life by the end of the story? Why or why not?
- 11.** Dinah is constantly surprised by her family's finances throughout the book. At one point, she finds out she is being paid less for "Meet the Newmans" than her husband and sons. What does her experience suggest about how finances shape the reality of women's lives and relationships?
- 12.** We find out the secret about M. Leslie after Del wakes up. Are you surprised by their identity? How does it change the dynamics between Dinah and Del?

**13.** Who do you think is the hero of the story? And do you think that is a helpful way to think about these characters?

**14.** What do you think of the ?Five Years Later? epilogue? Do any of the resolutions of the characters? lives surprise you?

**15.** Although the book is set in the 1960s, do you find the story timely? What elements of the novel still feel relevant today?

## Author Bio

Jennifer Niven is the #1 *New York Times* and internationally bestselling author of 13 books, fiction and nonfiction, including the massive breakout ALL THE BRIGHT PLACES, which she also adapted for film. Her award-winning books have been translated into more than 75 languages and have sold upward of 3.5 million copies worldwide. Jennifer has loved television and film her whole life and has been lucky enough to develop projects with Netflix, Sony, ABC and Warner Bros. She divides her time between coastal Georgia and Los Angeles with her husband and literary cats.

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