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Missing Pieces

by Heather Gudenkauf



About the Book

A woman uncovers earth-shattering secrets about her husband's family in this chilling page-turner from *New York Times* bestselling author Heather Gudenkauf

Sarah Quinlan's husband, Jack, has been haunted for decades by the untimely death of his mother when he was just a teenager, her body found in the cellar of their family farm, the circumstances a mystery. The case rocked the small farm town of Penny Gate, Iowa, where Jack was raised, and for years Jack avoided returning home. But when his beloved aunt Julia is in an accident, hospitalized in a coma, Jack and Sarah are forced to confront the past that they have long evaded.

Upon arriving in Penny Gate, Sarah and Jack are welcomed by the family Jack left behind all those years ago --- barely a trace of the wounds that had once devastated them all. But as facts about Julia's accident begin to surface, Sarah realizes that nothing about the Quinlans is what it seems. Caught in a flurry of unanswered questions, Sarah dives deep into the puzzling rabbit hole of Jack's past. But the farther in she climbs, the harder it is for her to get out. And soon she is faced with a deadly truth she may not be prepared for.

Audiobook available, narrated by Christina Traister

Discussion Guide

Click here for the comprehensive, publisher's Book Club Discussion Guide.

CHARACTER

1. Which character do you believe changed the most throughout the story? How did they evolve? Was it for the better or

worse?

2. What are your feelings about the character of Jack? Can you empathize with his desire to distance himself from his past? Should he share more with Sarah?

3. The setting is almost a character in itself. Would this story work in a town or city larger than Penny Gate? How does Lydia and Jack?s old house act as a character?

4. The relationships depicted in this story are dynamic and complex. Which relationship did you find to be the strongest? The weakest? Which changed the most throughout the story?

5. The supporting characters play important roles in plot development. Which of these characters would you like to know more about?

PLOT

6. A great mystery is able to shift suspicion throughout the story. Who did you suspect was behind Julia?s death along the way?

7. How does the title MISSING PIECES relate to the overall plot? Do you like the title? Would you pick an alternative title?

8. Did you anticipate the ending? What clues did the author leave along the way?

LITERARY STYLE

9. The author chose to make the main character an advice columnist. How did Sarah?s alter ego of Dear Astrid aid the story and its development?

10. The writing style of MISSING PIECES differs from Heather Gudenkauf?s other books in that it is written in a third person, singular point of view. Her other books contain multiple points of view from various main characters. What does the reader gain from this single, all-knowing point of view? How would the story have changed if it were written in the style of Heather?s other books?

THEMES

11. What role do secrets play in the story? Are we entitled to our secrets? If you share a life with someone, are you allowed secrets and to keep your past in the past?

12. Discuss the theme of the past as it is used in MISSING PIECES. Do you believe a person?s past defines and shapes their present and future? What about the character?s in this story?

13. Discuss the symbolism of including the ?Three Blind Mice? nursery rhyme. Why do you think the author chose this nursery rhyme over others?

14. The nature of the small town is a recurring theme throughout MISSING PIECES. Everyone in Penny Gate knows Jack, his family and his past. What is the significance of seeing the story unfold through Sarah?s uniformed perspective?

15. What other themes and symbols did you notice throughout the book?

Author Bio

Heather Gudenkauf is the Edgar Award-nominated, *New York Times* and *USA Today* bestselling author of 11 novels, including THE OVERNIGHT GUEST, EVERYONE IS WATCHING and THE PERFECT HOSTS. Her debut novel, THE WEIGHT OF SILENCE, was an instant *NYT* bestseller and remained on the list for 22 weeks. Gudenkauf?s critically acclaimed novels have been published in over 25 countries and have sold over 2.5 million copies worldwide. Her books have been featured on many "Best Of" roundups, including lists by the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, NPR, Amazon, Apple Books, Goodreads and more.

Heather was born in Wagner, South Dakota, the youngest of six children. At one month of age, her family returned to the Rosebud Indian Reservation in South Dakota where her father was employed as a guidance counselor and her mother as a school nurse. At the age of three, her family moved to Iowa, where she grew up. Having been born with a profound unilateral hearing loss (there were many evenings when Heather and her father made a trip to the bus barn to look around the school bus for her hearing aids that she often conveniently would forget on the seat beside her). Heather tended to use books as a retreat, would climb into the toy box that her father?s students from Rosebud made for the family with a pillow, blanket and flashlight, close the lid, and escape the world around her. Heather became a voracious reader and the seed of becoming a writer was planted.

Heather lives in Iowa with her family and a very spoiled German Shorthaired Pointer named Lolo. In her free time, Heather enjoys spending time with her family, reading, swimming and hiking. She is currently working on her next novel.

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