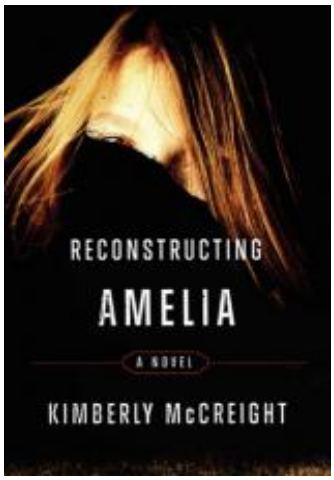
ReadingGroupGuides
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Reconstructing Amelia

by Kimberly McCreight



About the Book

In RECONSTRUCTING AMELIA, the stunning debut novel from Kimberly McCreight, Kate's in the middle of the biggest meeting of her career when she gets the telephone call from Grace Hall, her daughter?s exclusive private school in Park Slope, Brooklyn. Amelia has been suspended, effective immediately, and Kate must come get her daughter --- now. But Kate?s stress over leaving work quickly turns to panic when she arrives at the school and finds it surrounded by police officers, fire trucks and an ambulance. By then it?s already too late for Amelia. And for Kate.

An academic overachiever despondent over getting caught cheating has jumped to her death. At least that?s the story Grace Hall tells Kate. And clouded as she is by her guilt and grief, it is the one she forces herself to believe. Until she gets an anonymous text: *She didn?t jump.*

RECONSTRUCTING AMELIA is about secret first loves, old friendships and an all-girls club steeped in tradition. But, most of all, it?s the story of how far a mother will go to vindicate the memory of a daughter whose life she couldn?t save.

Discussion Guide

1. What is Amelia?s relationship like with her mother? Why doesn?t she share more with Kate? Why are adolescents often so reluctant to talk to their parents about the events in their lives?especially problems they are having with friends?

2. Describe Amelia. Is she a typical teenager? Talk about her friendship with Sylvia. What drew the girls together? What about her relationships with Zadie and Dylan? What made her feel so close to her Internet friend, Ben?

3. Might Amelia?s situation have been different if she?d had a larger family around her? What if that family had been larger, but more filled with conflict?

4. Is Kate a good mother? She believes she knows her daughter well, but does she? What does she discover about Amelia that surprises her? What does she discover that confirms her deepest beliefs about Amelia and their relationship?

5. What kind of a support network does Kate have to rely on? Does she bear any blame for the events that occur? Is there any way she could have prevented the tragedy? What about Grace Hall?how much, if any, responsibility does the school bear for Amelia?s death? Who can you turn to for help in handling a problem involving your child?

6. Why is being popular so important in adolescence? Has the Internet and social networking added to the pressures teenagers must cope with?

7. What impact does class play in the story? What about sexuality?Amelia?s recognition of her own desires? What about Amelia?s need to be perfect?her drive to be a good student?

8. Why does such a smart girl like Amelia fall into the trap of the secret clubs? Why isn?t she more suspicious of the Magpies and the boys around them? How did her keeping the secret about the Maggies impact her relationship with Sylvia? Why are some children cruel to others? Did your school have a hierarchy or clubs like the Magpies? Where did you fit it?

9. If you have a child, how much do you know about his or her life? How far should parents go to monitor their child?s life? Do children have a right to privacy the way adults do? What might someone learn if they tried to ?reconstruct? you from your emails, correspondence, texts, tweets, messages, blog posts, and Facebook updates? Does social media make us too connected? What is your opinion of social media?do you think it?s a positive development or an erosion of who we are and how we interact?

10. How does the author ratchet up the suspense in the story? What clues does she provide to point you toward the truth?or away from it?

11. Bullying is a major topic across the media and throughout society. Do you believe it is a serious issue, or do you think it?s a phase that all children go through? How has the rise of the Internet contributed to the severity of bullying and to our awareness of it? Can we decrease the incidents of bullying? How do we learn to stand up to mean people?

12. Does Kate get closure when she discovers the truth? Where do you think she will go from here?

13. What inspired you or your group to choose Reconstructing Amelia? Did it meet your expectations? Is it an accurate representation of modern parenting and growing up in twenty-first century America? What did you take away from reading the book?

Author Bio

Kimberly McCreight is the *New York Times* bestselling author of RECONSTRUCTING AMELIA, WHERE THEY FOUND HER, A GOOD MARRIAGE, FRIENDS LIKE THESE, LIKE MOTHER, LIKE DAUGHTER and SOMEONE ELSE'S HUSBAND, as well as a young adult trilogy, *The Outliers*. She?s been nominated for the Edgar, Anthony and Alex awards, and her books have been translated into more than 20 languages. She lives in Brooklyn.

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