ReadingGroupGuides
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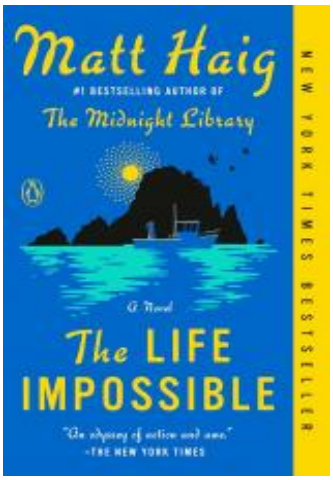
The Life Impossible

by Matt Haig



About the Book

The remarkable next novel from Matt Haig, the author of the #1 *New York Times* bestseller THE MIDNIGHT LIBRARY, with more than nine million copies sold worldwide.

?What looks like magic is simply a part of life we don?t understand yet??

When retired math teacher Grace Winters is left a run-down house on a Mediterranean island by a long-lost friend, curiosity gets the better of her. She arrives in Ibiza with a one-way ticket, no guidebook and no plan.

Among the rugged hills and golden beaches of the island, Grace searches for answers about her friend?s life and how it ended. What she uncovers is stranger than she ever could have dreamed. But to dive into this impossible truth, Grace must first come to terms with her past.

Filled with wonder and wild adventure, this is a story of hope and the life-changing power of a new beginning.

Discussion Guide

1. Throughout the book, Grace uses mathematical concepts, equations and thinkers to understand the world around her. This often brings her comfort and allows her to cope with moments that unsettle or worry her. How do you see the world? Do you use a particular lens, like Grace, to explain certain phenomena?

2. Grace?s kindness towards her student, Maurice, leads him to reach out to her for guidance years after they last spoke. Likewise, Christina gifts Grace her house because of her generosity decades earlier. What do these interactions show us about the importance of our interactions with acquaintances, and even strangers? How can we practice these small acts of kindness in our own lives?

3. By the time Grace arrives in Ibiza, she?s an older woman: her husband has died, she?s retired from her job, and her body suffers constant aches and pains. Many people --- herself included --- would say that her life?s adventures are at an end, but they?ve only just begun. How do her experiences resist society?s expectations for her age? How can we break out of labels and stereotypes in our own lives?

4. Ibiza is a multi-faceted place: it has party clubs, family resorts, natural areas, local communities and more. What aspects of the island are most important to each of the characters? How do these seemingly separate areas interact and influence one another throughout the novel?

5. Many of the characters in this novel are family. There?s Grace and her son, Daniel; Christina and her daughter, Lieke; and Alberto and his daughter, Marta. How do these relationships vary from one another? How do they evolve as the story progresses? In what ways do characters find family outside of blood relations?

6. Grace?s life shares interesting parallels with Art Butler?s. Both characters are haunted by the loss of a loved one. How, and why, do Grace and Art deal with their emotions differently? Is it possible to redirect grief into anger, or do we have to face it head-on to overcome it?

7. Throughout the novel, characters give each other gifts big and small: Christina leaves her house to Grace, Grace gives Christina her St. Christopher?s pendant, La Presencia gifts certain people powers. Are some of these gifts more significant than others? If so, how? What does it mean to give a gift with no expectation of reciprocation? Is there a gift you?ve received that means a great deal to you?

8. Grace has suffered many personal losses in her life. She has carried a lot of grief. And it?s the loss of a friend that brings her to the island in the first place. Over the course of the book, something happens that changes how she feels about grief. What is it that she learns? What have you noticed about how different people manage loss?

9. At one point in the novel, Lieke says, ?How can you live a life if you know everything that is going to happen?? And Grace observes, ?The gift of La Presencia was also its curse.? Do you think it?s important to have mystery in life, or do you prefer to avoid surprises? Can we change the future with our actions, or is it set in stone? In what ways can we sometimes surprise ourselves?

10. The environment is an important presence throughout the novel as Grace and her companions fight to save Ibiza?s natural landscapes from man-made destruction. How is nature important to the characters and communities in the book? How is nature important to you? What does La Presencia teach Grace, and us, about the significance of life big and small?

11. ?Depression is always smaller than you, even when it feels vast,? writes Matt Haig in his memoir, REASONS TO STAY ALIVE. ?It operates within you, you do not operate within it.? How does Grace?s journey embody this philosophy? In what ways can we find joy even when our sadness feels insurmountable? How does appreciation for the

small moments in life allow us to overcome big emotions such as grief?

Author Bio

Matt Haig was born in Sheffield, England. His novels include THE HUMANS, HOW TO STOP TIME, and THE MIDNIGHT LIBRARY, which has been a #1 *New York Times* bestseller and sold more than 14 million copies worldwide. His nonfiction works include his award-winning mental illness memoir REASONS TO STAY ALIVE and THE COMFORT BOOK. His most recent fiction, THE LIFE IMPOSSIBLE, was a *New York Times* bestseller. He has also written several children?s books, including A BOY CALLED CHRISTMAS, which became a major feature film. His work has been published in 56 languages, and he is an advocate for literacy, libraries and better mental health provision for everyone.

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