The Space Between Before and After

by Jean Reynolds Page



About the Book

Forty-two and divorced, Holli Templeton has begun to realize the pleasures of owning her life for the first time. But when she learns that her son Conner has unexpectedly fled college and moved to Texas with his troubled girlfriend, Kilian, she must once again put her family?s needs before her own. As if that's not enough, Holli notices signs of serious decline in the beloved Texas grandmother who raised her. She has no choice but to leave the comfort zone of life in New York and return to her hometown in Texas to care for the people she loves.

In the tight space between these two generations, Holli?s journey back to Texas stirs unresolved hurts from her childhood. But something else happens in this uneasy homecoming. Comfort arrives in the ethereal presence of the mother long lost to her, and Holli is surprised to find that as she struggles to help her son and grandmother, the wounds of her own past begin to heal. The space between before and after ? easily the most challenging place she has ever known ? begins to reveal an unanticipated hope for what the future might hold.

Click here to learn more about the soundtrack to **The Space Before and After**.

Discussion Guide

1. Kilian, a young woman living with cystic fibrosis, is a central character in the novel. In what ways does learning of this condition alter Holli?s response to her son?s relationship with Kilian? How would you react if your child became involved with someone living with a serious medical condition?

2. When she marries Harrison, Hollyanne changes her name to Holli. Why did she make this decision and what is she trying to accomplish? Do you think she succeeds?

3. What individual motivations draw Raine and Georgia together in friendship? How does the relationship evolve with

time? Is Holli right to resent Raine?s attachment to Georgia?

4. When the facts of Celia?s death are revealed to Holli by Grandma Raine, they absolve Georgia, and to a certain extent Ray, of responsibility for the loss of Celia and the baby. Even in light of this, Holli cannot let go of her anger toward Georgia. What other factors play into Holli?s feelings about her stepmother? Are they valid?

5. Holli is terribly upset when she learns of Kilian?s pregnancy. She has great concern over the impact a baby would have on Conner?s life, and she admits to herself that she wants there to be some ?medical, of not moral? reason for the pregnancy to be terminated. Given this, why is she devastated by the news that Kilian has ended the pregnancy?

6. Why did Kilian lie about having the abortion? Do you think she did this to protect Conner, or were her reasons self-serving?

7. How do you feel about Grandma Raine?s ?visitations? with her lost daughter and, likewise, Holli?s occasional, strong sense of her mother?s presence? Do you believe that spiritual elements of those we love remain among us?

8. How responsible is Harrision for the break-up of his marriage to Holli? Did Holli?s childhood baggage drive the demise of their relationship, or were her reactions to Harrison?s behavior in the marriage appropriate?

9. In spite of the fact that Tina was the result of Ray?s infidelity with Georgia, Holli adores her stepsister and develops a life-long bond with the younger woman. What accounts for Holli?s lack of resentment --- and in fact her abiding devotion --- towards a sibling who was the product of such painful circumstances?

10. Significant events in Holli?s family run parallel with flashpoints involving human exploration in space. How do you think the triumphs and tragedies of NASA affect us as a nation? What do they represent in our cultural identity?

Author Bio

Jean Reynolds Page is the author of A BLESSED EVENT, ACCIDENTAL HAPPINESS, and THE SPACE BETWEEN BEFORE AND AFTER, among others. She grew up in North Carolina and graduated with a degree in journalism from The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She worked as an arts publicist in New York City and for over a decade and reviewed dance performances for numerous publications before turning full time to fiction in 2001. In addition to North Carolina and New York, she has lived in Boston and Dallas. She moved with her husband and three children to the Seattle area in 2002.

Critical Praise

?Both the story's emotional pull and intricate plot twists are sure to seduce new readers.?

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