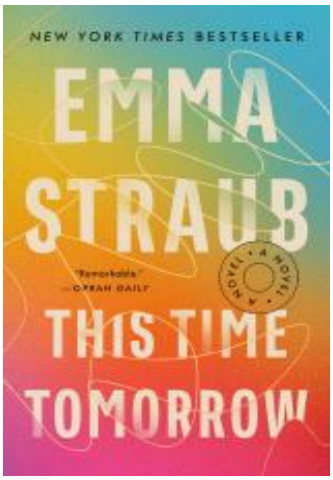
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This Time Tomorrow

by Emma Straub



About the Book

What if you could take a vacation to your past?

With her celebrated humor, insight and heart, beloved *New York Times* bestselling author Emma Straub offers her own twist on traditional time-travel tropes and a different kind of love story.

On the eve of her 40th birthday, Alice?s life isn?t terrible. She likes her job, even if it isn?t exactly the one she expected. She?s happy with her apartment, her romantic status and her independence, and she adores her lifelong best friend. But her father is ailing, and it feels to her as if something is missing. When she wakes up the next morning, she finds herself back in 1996, reliving her 16th birthday. But it isn?t just her adolescent body that shocks her, or seeing her high school crush --- it?s her dad: the vital, charming, 40-something version of her father with whom she is reunited. Now armed with a new perspective on her own life and his, some past events take on new meaning. Is there anything that she would change if she could?

Discussion Guide

1. Time travel is a genre we all know and love, especially if, like Alice, you were watching movies in the '80s and '90s. In what ways does THIS TIME TOMORROW use time travel to explore themes of parent-child relationships, growing older and growing up?

2. Leonard Stern is Alice?s beloved father, a writer of science fiction, an eater of Grape-Nuts and Gray?s Papaya hot dogs, and a single parent. On page 135, Alice reflects that she ?had never felt like she belonged to anyone --- or like anyone belonged to her --- except for Leonard.? How does Alice characterize the younger version of her father versus the older one? What does she learn about the types of love we feel for our parents at different ages?

3. Straub writes with clarity and wit about teenagers. On page 99, she says, ?Teenage girls? skeletons were half bones and half secrets that only other teenage girls knew.? Describe Alice?s awakening as a teenage girl. What does Alice learn by going back to her teenage self? What does she do differently, and what does she want to stay the same?

4. Alice attends a prestigious private school in New York City called Belvedere, and as an adult, she works in the school?s admissions office. How does Straub characterize Belvedere? How does she use the setting to explore social class, status and wealth?

5. Discuss Alice?s relationship with Tommy Joffey. How does she feel about him when she?s 16 versus when she?s 40? What does time travel reveal to Alice that she might not otherwise have learned?

6. On pages 108?9, Straub writes, ?What a very long time one had to be an adult, after rushing through childhood and adolescence.? Emily and Melinda are Alice?s coworkers at Belvedere --- one younger than Alice and just starting out in the world, and one approaching retirement. How do these two adult characters reflect Alice?s understanding of differences between generations?

7. Sam and Alice are best friends in both their 16-year-old and 40-year-old iterations. Compare and contrast their friendship in these two eras. What notable shifts did you identify? What does Alice learn from her teenage self about the kind of friendship she wants with Sam as she enters her 40th year?

8. THIS TIME TOMORROW is also an ode to New York City. On page 93, Straub writes, ?New York City [was like] a snake shedding its skin in bits and pieces, so slowly that by the time the snake was brand new, no one would notice.? How does the novel use the city to reflect on larger ideas about change versus stasis?

9. As an adult, Alice understands she hasn?t done all the things she planned when she was young. She always assumed that her father, Leonard, was the successful one, until she realizes that he ?was afraid, too, and happier to stay close to what had worked, rather than risk it all on something new? (p. 132). What is Straub saying about fear and ambition? About action versus passivity? How do Alice?s and Leonard?s attitudes toward these ideas change?

10. When Alice visits the psychic on the day after her 40th birthday, she asks, ?How do I know if I?m living the right life?? (p. 231). What answers does Alice come to by the end of the novel?

11. If you could take a vacation to your past, what day would you choose to relive? Is there anything that you would do differently? In what ways did THIS TIME TOMORROW make you reflect on time and how you spend it?

Author Bio

Emma Straub is the *New York Times* bestselling author of seven books for adults: the novels AMERICAN FANTASY, THIS TIME TOMORROW, ALL ADULTS HERE, THE VACATIONERS, MODERN LOVERS, LAURA LAMONT'S LIFE IN PICTURES, and the short story collection OTHER PEOPLE WE MARRIED. She is also the author of three picture books: GAGA MISTAKE DAY, which she co-wrote with her mother; MAMA HUG; and VERY GOOD HATS. She is a Guggenheim Foundation Fellow, and her work has been published in more than 20 languages.

Emma and her husband own Books Are Magic, an independent bookstore in Brooklyn, New York.

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Publication Date: May 16, 2023
Genres: Fiction, Women's Fiction
Paperback: 336 pages
Publisher: Riverhead Books
ISBN-10: 0525539018
ISBN-13: 9780525539018