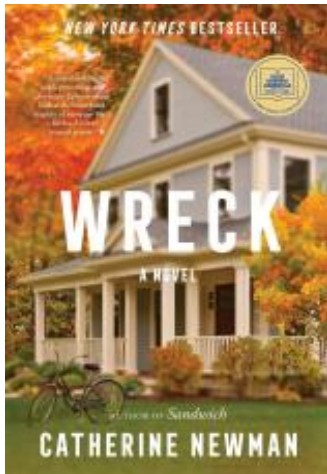


Wreck

by Catherine Newman



About the Book

The acclaimed bestselling author of SANDWICH is back with a wonderful novel, full of laughter and heart, about marriage, family, and what happens when life doesn't go as planned.

If you loved Rocky and her family on vacation on Cape Cod, wait until you join them at home two years later. (And if this is your first meeting with this crew, get ready to laugh and cry --- and relate.)

Rocky, still anxious, nostalgic and funny, is living in Western Massachusetts with her husband, Nick, and their daughter, Willa, who's back home after college. Their son, Jamie, has taken a new job in New York, and Mort, Rocky's widowed father, has moved in.

It all couldn't be more ridiculously normal?until Rocky finds herself obsessed with a local accident that only tangentially affects them --- and with a medical condition that, she hopes, won't affect them at all.

With her signature wit and wisdom, Catherine Newman explores the hidden rules of family, the heavy weight of uncertainty, and the gnarly fact that people --- no matter how much you love them --- are not always exactly who you want them to be.

Discussion Guide

1. How does Catherine Newman use humor to tackle serious subjects like illness, death and anxiety? Did you find the balance effective?

2. The train wreck is a central event in the book. What symbolic role does it play? How does it connect the different characters and themes?
3. Discuss the book's title. What different kinds of "wrecks" --- literal and figurative --- occur in the novel?
4. The quote "To have a child is to have your heart go walking around outside your body" captures a central theme. How does this sentiment play out in the story?
5. The author uses humor to address serious themes like mortality and grief. How did this balance affect your reading experience?
6. The novel includes commentary on modern life, such as the digital world and online health information. How do these observations enhance the story?
7. How does Rocky's relationship with her body change over the course of the novel as she deals with her mysterious rash and potential diagnosis?
8. The conflict between Willa and Jamie over his job highlights a clash of values. Whose side, if any, did you take? What does the book say about family loyalty versus personal ethics?
9. Empathy is a major theme. Where do you see characters demonstrating empathy, and where do they fail to do so? How does Rocky's empathy for the victims of the crash affect her?
10. Rocky navigates the challenges of parenting Willa and Jamie as adults. How does the novel portray the complexities of this stage of parenting?
11. How does the presence of Rocky's father and his decision to live independently add depth to the story? What does it say about aging and independence?
12. The novel explores the challenges and rewards of long-term partnership through Rocky and Nick. What makes their relationship feel authentic?
13. What does the novel suggest about finding happiness and gratitude in the midst of life's difficulties and imperfections?
14. Which quotes or passages stood out to you the most, and why? How do they encapsulate the novel's themes?
15. Consider the ending of the book. Did you find it satisfying? What does it suggest about Rocky's future and her ability to cope with uncertainty?

Author Bio

Catherine Newman has written numerous columns, articles and canned-bean recipes for magazines and newspapers, and her essays have been widely anthologized. She is the author of the novels WE ALL WANT IMPOSSIBLE THINGS, SANDWICH and WRECK; the memoirs WAITING FOR BIRDY and CATASTROPHIC HAPPINESS; the middle-grade novel ONE MIXED-UP NIGHT; and the bestselling kids' life-skills books HOW TO BE A PERSON and WHAT CAN I SAY? She lives in Amherst, Massachusetts.

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