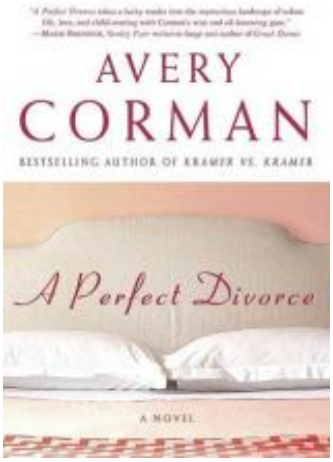
ReadingGroupGuides
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A Perfect Divorce

by Avery Corman



About the Book

Karen and Rob are the well-intentioned parents of a teenage son, Tommy, who believe they can avoid the emotional fallout of their failed two-career marriage. Both are successful individuals who have pursued other personal relationships since their divorce, but have managed to stay connected through their son. When Tommy goes off the tracks, his troubles send shock waves through relationships on all sides. Staggering under the weight of his parents' expectations and need for denial, Tommy risks everything --- and Avery Corman turns everyday life into a brilliant page-turning drama. Not since **Kramer vs. Kramer**, Corman's landmark novel and the basis for the Academy Award-winning motion picture, have truths about us --- about marriage, divorce and parenting --- been so accurately and emotionally dramatized.

Discussion Guide

1. In the author?s previous book, **Kramer vs. Kramer**, the ex-spouses end up in a court custody battle. Would Karen and Rob have been better off with clearer lines of responsibility for Tommy?s upbringing, or was theirs the best possible arrangement?

2. Tommy and his peers are under considerable pressure to perform well on their SATs and to have stellar resumes for their college applications. Do we put too much pressure on young people in our culture today to perform well in school?

3. Tommy?s parents can afford to hire SAT tutors. Do you think this poses an unfair advantage over other, less fortunate students? Should his parents have declined tutors for ethical reasons? Or do you think since students are all in a fierce competition, extra help is fair game?

4. Is Tommy?s behavior, his diffident school performance, and subsequently, his decision about college, a direct result of his parents? divorce or should it be blamed on his academic limitations? Or is his behavior the result of a combination of factors?

5. When Tommy makes his crucial decision about his college career, do his parents behave responsibly? Should they be even more active in attempting to get him back on track and have they left too much to chance? Or is allowing him to find his own way responsible parenting?

6. Bill doesn?t have much patience for Tommy, whom he regards as a high-maintenance teenager. Is his attitude appropriate, or is he merely being selfish and interested in his own social agenda? Is Karen overly sensitive about Tommy, or on-target in her assessment of her relationship with Bill?

7. Tommy?s difficulties resemble the effect of throwing a rock in a pond, the ripples reverberating on all sides. Do the adults invest too much in the boy?s success or lack thereof? Do they blur the lines between where their lives end and his begins? Can you relate to their position?

8. What would you consider a desirable balance between work and home life, since Karen and Rob never seem to find the proportion that enables them to be successfully married to each other and successfully active in their careers? Is it possible for men and women to ?have it all,? or is that an impossible ideal that jeopardizes our marriages?

9. Could Rob and Karen?s marriage have been saved? Should they have found a way to work even harder on the marriage, or was it doomed by their personalities and by the nature of their individual professional needs?

10. Tommy and his friends Brian and Jill are all affected by their parents? divorces. Is divorce inevitably detrimental to young people? Or has divorce been successfully integrated into our lives and are the young people in the novel more sensitive to their parents? divorces than the norm?

Author Bio

Avery Corman is the author of **Kramer vs. Kramer**, the novel that helped redefine child custody and divorce, and the basis for the Academy Award-winning motion picture. His other novels include **The Old Neighborhood**, **50**, **Prized Possessions**, and **Oh, God!** He lives in New York City.

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