ReadingGroupGuides
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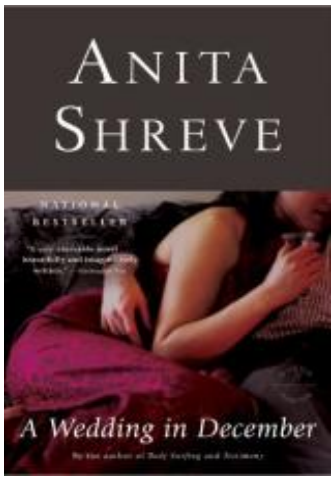
A Wedding in December

by Anita Shreve



About the Book

At an inn in the Berkshire Mountains, seven former schoolmates gather to celebrate a wedding-a reunion that becomes the occasion of astonishing revelations as the friends collectively recall a long-ago night that indelibly marked each of their lives.

Written with the fluent narrative artistry that distinguishes all of Anita Shreve's bestselling novels, A Wedding in December acutely probes the mysteries of the human heart and the endless allure of paths not taken.

Discussion Guide

1. Each of the former schoolmates who are reunited in A Wedding in December has faced a number of challenges and disappointments since graduation. In particular, they?ve all found themselves in quandaries when it comes to romance. Which characters would you say are the luckiest in love? How do you define a successful relationship?

2. ?One can never tell the story of a marriage,? Nora says to Harrison (page 151). ?At the very least, a marriage is two intersecting stories, one of which we will never know.? What does Nora mean by this observation? Are there relationships depicted in the novel that support her statement?

3. As the story of the reunion weekend unfolds, another story is revealed --- the tale Agnes is writing about Innes Finch. Why do you think the author chooses to tell another story within the story? What is the significance of the Halifax tragedies to Agnes at this point in her life?

4. For Harrison, Nora is the epitome of the perfect woman. Hazel represents the same for Innes. Yet their respective encounters are relatively brief. What is it about these two women that the men find so compelling? Do you think the two men really know the objects of their desire?

5. Some of the novel?s characters regard the events of 9/11 as reminders of the ?democracy of catastrophe? (page 146). Jerry, on the other hand, draws a distinction between the people who witnessed the tragedy firsthand and those who viewed it from the safety of their homes miles away. Which opinion do you favor?

6. In A Wedding in December we are privy to select perspectives --- those of Harrison, Agnes, Bridget, and Innes. Do you think these were the best narrators for the respective stories? How might the novel?s principal narrative have been different if filtered through Nora?s eyes? How might the Halifax story have been different if told from Hazel?s point of view?

7. Consider the strengths and weaknesses of the novel?s main characters. How do the male and female characters compare to one another?

8. Harrison acknowledges that the defining feature of private lives is ?that anyone looking in from the outside could never know the reality? (page 151). He longs to tell Nora the truth about Stephen, and Agnes?s stunning revelation triggers the others to reveal their own hidden truths as well. What, if anything, do these confessions change for the friends? Do they come to regard one another differently in the end?

9. On page 188, Agnes makes a conscious decision concerning the character Louise in the story she?s writing. What are Agnes?s reasons for her choice? Do you feel it is a fair one?

10. Harrison is at a crossroads in the novel?s final chapter, torn between his family and duty and a chance at true love. Which path do you think he will choose? What, in your opinion, is the right decision?

11. Early in the novel, Agnes ponders the definition of a good person (page 35). Which of the novel?s characters do you think might be considered ?good?? Explain your answer.

12. Many of the characters in the novel have made or will make significant sacrifices in their lives. Identify some of these sacri- fices. Are they necessary? Are they justifiable?

13. Although the novel centers on a happy occasion, the characters also experience a great deal of disillusionment. Does this story end on a hopeful note? Why or why not?

14. The reunion provides ample opportunity to see changes in the various friends since their days at Kidd Academy. How does each character?s 1974 teenage self compare with his or her 2001 adult self?

15. How do you think this reunion weekend will ultimately influence the group? What is the likelihood that these high school friends will be in touch with one another after the wedding?

Author Bio

Anita Shreve was a high school teacher and a freelance magazine journalist before writing fiction full time. She was the author 19 novels, including THE STARS ARE FIRE as well as the international bestseller THE PILOT'S WIFE, and THE WEIGHT OF WATER, a finalist for the Orange Prize. On March 29, 2018, Shreve passed away from cancer at the age of 71.

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