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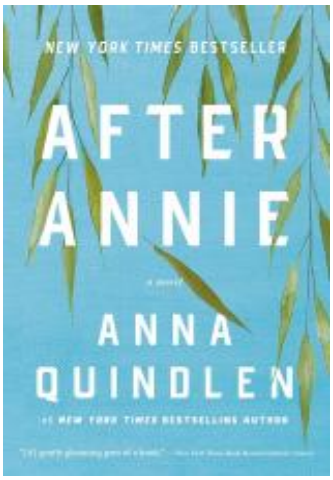
After Annie

by Anna Quindlen



About the Book

Anna Quindlen?s trademark wisdom on family, friendship and the ties that bind us are at the center of this novel about the power of love to transcend loss and triumph over adversity, by the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of STILL LIFE WITH BREAD CRUMBS and ONE TRUE THING.

When Annie Brown dies suddenly, her husband, children and closest friend are left to find a way forward without the woman who has been the lynchpin of all their lives. Bill is overwhelmed without his beloved wife, and Annemarie wrestles with the bad habits her best friend had helped her overcome. And Ali, the eldest of Annie?s children, has to grow up overnight, to care for her younger brothers and even her father and to puzzle out for herself many of the mysteries of adult life.

Over the course of the next year, what saves them all is Annie --- ever-present in their minds, loving but not sentimental, caring but nobody?s fool, a voice in their heads that is funny, sharp and remarkably clear. The power she has given to those who loved her is the power to go on without her. The lesson they learn is that no one beloved is ever truly gone.

Written in Quindlen?s emotionally resonant voice and with her deep and generous understanding of people, AFTER ANNIE is about hope, and about the unexpected power of adversity to change us in profound and indelible ways.

Discussion Guide

1. Annie, like all people, has many different selves: Everyone in her life knows one aspect of her extremely well, but only by looking at all of those parts together can we truly see the whole. Discuss the different, similar and occasionally opposing views the people in Annie?s life have of her. Who was she *truly*?

2. ?I didn?t lose my mother,? Ali says. ?I hate it that people say that. I didn?t lose her, and she?s not gone, and she didn?t

pass away. She?s dead.? Discuss the language and euphemisms we use to talk about death. Do you prefer to use ?softer? language like ?lost? and ?passed away,? or more straightforward words like ?died?? Why do you think this is?

3. With which character do you feel you have the most in common? The least? Discuss.

4. Why do you think that the people in our lives sometimes loom larger after death?

5. When we lose someone we love, part of ourselves, part of our history, seems to die with them. Has this ever happened to you? What was it like? How does this happen to each character in AFTER ANNIE?

6. ?They were all floating in some in-between, where nothing seemed real and nothing seemed right,? Quindlen writes. Have you had this experience with grief? What did it feel like for you? Do you remember when life started to feel real again?

7. Which scene in the novel moved you the most?

8. What do you think happens to the characters after the book ends? In five years? 20?

9. Have you read other novels by Anna Quindlen? What consistent themes do you notice throughout her work?

Author Bio

Anna Quindlen is a novelist and journalist whose work has appeared on fiction, nonfiction and self-help bestseller lists. She is the author of many novels: OBJECT LESSONS, ONE TRUE THING, BLACK AND BLUE, BLESSINGS, RISE AND SHINE, EVERY LAST ONE, STILL LIFE WITH BREAD CRUMBS and MILLER'S VALLEY. Her memoir LOTS OF CANDLES, PLENTY OF CAKE, published in 2012, was a #1 *New York Times* bestseller. Her book A SHORT GUIDE TO A HAPPY LIFE has sold more than a million copies. While a columnist at *The New York Times*, she won the Pulitzer Prize and published two collections: LIVING OUT LOUD and THINKING OUT LOUD. Her *Newsweek* columns were collected in LOUD AND CLEAR.

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