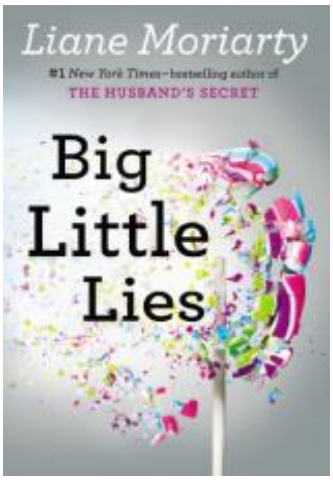
Big Little Lies

by Liane Moriarty



About the Book

Sometimes it?s the little lies that turn out to be the most lethal...

A murder...a tragic accident...or just parents behaving badly?

What?s indisputable is that someone is dead. But who did what?

BIG LITTLE LIES follows three women, each at a crossroads:

Madeline is a force to be reckoned with. She?s funny and biting, passionate, she remembers everything and forgives no one. Her ex-husband and his yogi new wife have moved into her beloved beachside community, and their daughter is in the same kindergarten class as Madeline?s youngest (how is this possible). And to top it all off, Madeline?s teenage daughter seems to be choosing Madeline?s ex-husband over her. (How. Is. This. Possible?).

Celeste is the kind of beautiful woman who makes the world stop and stare. While she may seem a bit flustered at times, who wouldn?t be, with those rambunctious twin boys? Now that the boys are starting school, Celeste and her husband look set to become the king and queen of the school parent body. But royalty often comes at a price, and Celeste is grappling with how much more she is willing to pay.

New to town, single mom Jane is so young that another mother mistakes her for the nanny. Jane is sad beyond her years and harbors secret doubts about her son. But why? While Madeline and Celeste soon take Jane under their wing, none of them realizes how the arrival of Jane and her inscrutable little boy will affect them all.

BIG LITTLE LIES is a brilliant take on ex-husbands and second wives, mothers and daughters, schoolyard scandal, and the dangerous little lies we tell ourselves just to survive.

Discussion Guide

1. At the beginning of the novel, Madeline is enraged over Ziggy not being invited to Amabella?s birthday party. Why do you think Madeline becomes so angry about such a seemingly small injustice? Do you think Madeline is the kind of person who just looks for a fight, or do you think she was justified in feeling so upset? And do you think that by tackling both ends of the spectrum --- from schoolyard bullying and parents behaving badly in the playground to displays of domestic violence in all its incarnations --- that the author is trying to say something about the bullying that happens out in the open every day?

2. There is a lot of discussion about women and their looks. On the beach, Jane?s mom shows that she has rather poor body image. Jane observes that women over 40 are constantly talking about their age. And Madeline says, ?She didn?t want to admit, even to herself, just how much the aging of her face really did genuinely depress her. She wanted to be above such superficial concerns. She wanted to be depressed about the state of the world?.? [p. 82] Do you think this obsession with looks is specific to women, particularly women of a certain age? Why or why not?

3. There are a lot of scenes in which the characters say they wish they could be violent: Jane says she wants to throw Ziggy into the wall when he has a tirade in the bathtub, that she would hit Renata if she was in front of her, and then she stops just short of kicking Harper. Do you think the author is trying to show the reader Perry?s side and have us sympathize with him? Or, rather, that feeling violent is a natural impulse but one that people learn to suppress?

4. When Ziggy has to do his family tree, Madeline comments, ?Why try to slot fractured families into neat little boxes in this day and age?? [p. 184] A lot of Madeline?s storyline is about the complications that arise from the merging of new modern families. What kind of problems exist among families and extended families now that didn?t when you were a child?

5. When Jane recounts what happened the night she got pregnant, she focuses on what the man said rather than on what he did. Why does Jane feel more violated by two words --- fat and ugly --- than by the actual assault? Jane seems to think the answer is ?Because we live in a beauty-obsessed society where the most important thing a woman can do is make herself attractive to men.? [p. 196] Do you agree?

6. The power of secrets is a theme throughout the novel. Jane remembers, ?She hadn?t told anyone. She?d swallowed it whole and pretended it meant nothing, and therefore it had come to mean everything.? [p. 220] Do you think this is a universal truth, that the more you keep something secret, the more power it takes on?

7. Gwen, the babysitter, seems to be the only one to suspect what is going on with Celeste and Perry. Celeste then realizes she?s never heard Gwen talk about a husband or a partner. Do you think the author intended to intimate that perhaps Gwen had had an abusive husband or partner and that she left him? And in light of what happens at the end with Bonnie, do you think it?s only people who have personally experienced abuse who pick up on the signs?

8. At one point Jane thinks she and Ziggy will have to leave Pirriwee because ?rich, beautiful people weren?t asked to leave anywhere.? [p. 362] Do you think different rules apply to rich people? Do you think being rich allowed Perry to get away with things longer than would have been likely if he hadn?t had money?

9. Bonnie says, ?We see. We fucking see!? [p. 421] Were you surprised to learn about Bonnie?s history? Were you surprised to discover that all along Max had been seeing what Perry was doing to Celeste?

10. What did you make of the interview snippets to the reporter? Do you think the author used them almost like a Greek chorus to make a point?

11. Madeline muses, ?Maybe it was actually an unspoken instant agreement between four women on the balcony: No woman should pay for the accidental death of that particular man. Maybe it was an involuntary, atavistic response to thousands of years of violence against women. Maybe it was for every rape, every brutal backhanded slap, every other Perry that had come before this one.? [p. 430] And then Madeline thinks, ?Sometimes doing the wrong thing was also right.? Do you agree with this statement? Do you agree with what the women decided to do? Do you think there?s a stronger bond between women than there is between men? Were you surprised that women who ostensibly didn?t like one another --- Madeline and Bonnie, Madeline and Renata --- ended up coming together to help one another out?

12. At one point in the book, Susi says that, in Australia, one woman dies every week because of domestic violence. In the United States, more than three women are murdered by their husbands or boyfriends every day. Every nine seconds in the United States a woman is assaulted or beaten. Domestic violence is the leading cause of injury to women --- more than that caused by car accidents, muggings, and rapes combined. Are you surprised by these statistics? Why or why not? Clearly, the author chose Celeste --- the picture-perfect mom and wife, as well as an educated lawyer --- to be the victim of domestic violence in order to make a point. Do you think it?s plausible that someone like her would fall victim to abuse such as this?

13. Madeline comments that ?there were so many levels of evil in the world.? [p. 433] Discuss the implications of this statement in light of the novel and the novel?s different storylines.

Author Bio

Liane Moriarty is the author of the #1 *New York Times* bestsellers BIG LITTLE LIES, APPLES NEVER FALL, THE HUSBAND'S SECRET, TRULY MADLY GUILTY and HERE ONE MOMENT; the *New York Times* bestsellers NINE PERFECT STRANGERS, WHAT ALICE FORGOT and THE LAST ANNIVERSARY; THE HYPNOTIST'S LOVE STORY; and THREE WISHES. She lives in Sydney, Australia, with her husband and two children.

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