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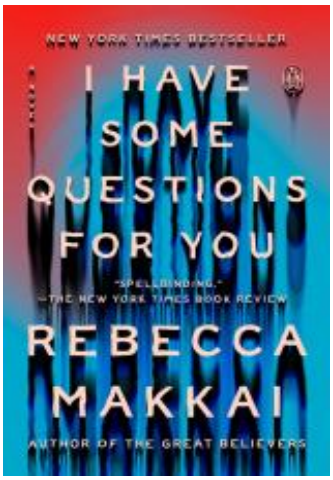
# I Have Some Questions for You

by Rebecca Makkai




## About the Book

**The riveting new novel --- "part true-crime page-turner, part campus coming-of-age" (*San Francisco Chronicle*) --- from the author of the Pulitzer Prize and National Book Award finalist THE GREAT BELIEVERS.**

A successful film professor and podcaster, Bodie Kane is content to forget her past --- the family tragedy that marred her adolescence, her four largely miserable years at a New Hampshire boarding school, and the murder of her former roommate, Thalia Keith, in the spring of their senior year. Though the circumstances surrounding Thalia?s death and the conviction of the school?s athletic trainer, Omar Evans, are hotly debated online, Bodie prefers --- needs --- to let sleeping dogs lie.

But when the Granby School invites her back to teach a course, Bodie is inexorably drawn to the case and its increasingly apparent ?aws. In their rush to convict Omar, did the school and the police overlook other suspects? Is the real killer still out there? As she falls down the very rabbit hole she was so determined to avoid, Bodie begins to wonder if she wasn?t as much of an outsider at Granby as she?d thought --- if, perhaps, back in 1995, she knew something that might have held the key to solving the case.

In I HAVE SOME QUESTIONS FOR YOU, award-winning author Rebecca Makkai has crafted her most irresistible novel yet: a stirring investigation into collective memory and a deeply felt examination of one woman?s reckoning with her past, with a trans?xing mystery at its heart. Timely, hypnotic and populated with a cast of unforgettable characters, I HAVE SOME QUESTIONS FOR YOU is at once a compulsive page-turner and a literary triumph.

## Discussion Guide

**1.** Several characters in I HAVE SOME QUESTIONS FOR YOU reflect on their adolescent selves --- versions of themselves that feel at once remote and familiar. Do you think it?s possible, with enough distance, for any of us ---

including Bodie --- to see our high school selves clearly? How do you think cultural norms have shifted since you were a teenager? How does Bodie?s sense of herself, then and now, affect her understanding of Thalia?s case?

**2.** True crime media has become exceedingly popular in recent years. Why do you think fans of the genre find it so fascinating and even therapeutic to dissect such gruesome events? What considerations factor into being an ethical creator or consumer of true crime media?

**3.** Bodie?s husband, Jerome, is publicly accused of predatory behavior in a relationship with a younger woman. Were you surprised by the way Bodie handles the allegations, or the fact that she was pressured to address them in the first place? How has the advent of social media shaped how public opinion forms and evolves when an alleged crime is made public? How does an awareness of a wider audience affect Bodie?s choices in her professional and private life?

**4.** On p. 174, Bodie thinks, ?Every article about Thalia?s death had fixated on how Thalia and Robbie were the perfect prep school couple, moneyed and talented and privileged, and Omar Evans --- no mention of his mother working at Dartmouth --- was this outsider. That made the best narrative.? How does the novel?s setting shape the story, both past and present? How does prejudice and the idea of the ?outsider? function at Granby and in the novel as a whole? Have you experienced any situations in your own life where the truth was warped by a community?s biases?

**5.** On p. 83, Omar?s mother, Sheila Evans, says, ?They made Omar out to be a bad person all-around. This one accusation wasn?t enough, they have to say he was dealing drugs, he was a violent man, he was sleeping with students. They paint a whole picture. They talk about him as if he came from nowhere, as if he had no family.? Does this resonate with media coverage you?ve witnessed in real life?

**6.** Reflecting on her reaction to Sheila Evans? account of what happened to Omar, Bodie thinks, ?I hated that I was thinking about myself rather than becoming a pure vessel to absorb Sheila?s grief, but the truth is that while anyone with a heart would have felt it break right then, my heart cracked along familiar fault lines? (pp. 84-85). What does it mean for one?s heart to break along ?familiar fault lines?? What do you make of Bodie?s --- and other characters? --- tendency to center themselves and their own grief and anxieties, even in the face of the profound suffering of Omar and his family? How do these frameworks shift over the course of the story?

**7.** Throughout the novel, we are reminded of how many stories of violence against women we regularly encounter on the news, on social media and in pop culture --- the contours of the cases hauntingly familiar even as locations and details differ. What was the cumulative effect of these references as you read? How did they inform your understanding of what happened to Thalia?

**8.** After hearing Beth?s account of her own high school experience, Bodie stifles a fleeting urge to chime in with her own perception of the school?s dynamics: ?I?d learned long ago not to counter people?s trauma with my own? (p. 373). Discuss this revelation. When do the characters in this novel act empathetically and put their own egos aside, and when do they privilege their own versions of events?

**9.** Toward the end of the novel, on p. 419, Bodie thinks, ?I was wrong about you, too, Mr. Bloch, but I still don?t feel that wrong. To put it another way: I was mistaken, but I wasn?t incorrect.? What do you think she means? Do you agree with her? Have you ever felt ?mistaken, but [not] incorrect??

**10.** Did this novel subvert or expand your knowledge of the criminal justice system? If so, how? What do you predict for the future of Omar?s case?

**11.** Whom did you personally suspect over the course of the novel? Did your judgment ever differ from Bodie?s? What surprised you the most as Bodie?s understanding of the case evolved?

## Author Bio

Rebecca Makkai is the author of the novels I HAVE SOME QUESTIONS FOR YOU, THE GREAT BELIEVERS, THE HUNDRED-YEAR HOUSE and THE BORROWER, and the story collection MUSIC FOR WARTIME. A finalist for the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award, THE GREAT BELIEVERS received an American Library Association Andrew Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Fiction and the *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize, among other honors, and was named one of the Ten Best Books of 2018 by *The New York Times*.

A 2022 Guggenheim fellow, Makkai is on the MFA faculties of the University of Nevada, Reno at Lake Tahoe and Northwestern University, and is the artistic director of StoryStudio Chicago. She lives on the campus of the midwestern boarding school where her husband teaches, and in Vermont.

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