

If You Lived Here, You'd Be Home Now

by Claire LaZebnik



About the Book

From the well-loved author of **Knitting Under the Influence** and **The Smart One and the Pretty One** comes a new novel about a young single mother trying to move out of her family's shadow. Rickie left home a long time ago-so how is it that at the age of twenty-five, she's living with her parents again, and sleeping in the bedroom of her childhood home?

At least one thing has changed since high school: She now has a very sweet but frequently challenging son named Noah, who attends the same tony private LA school she herself attended. Rickie fit in fine when she was a student, but now her age and tattoos make her stand out from all the blond Stepford moms, who are desperate to know why someone so young-and so unmarried-has a kid in first grade.

Already on the defensive, Rickie goes into full mother-tigress mode when her small and unathletic son tells her that the gym teacher is out to get him. She storms the principal's office, only to discover that Andrew Fulton, the coach, is no dumb jock. As her friendship with Andrew develops, Rickie finds herself questioning her assumptions-about motherhood, being a grown-up, and falling in love.

Discussion Guide

1. There are many mothers in this book --- Rickie, obviously, and Melanie and Laurel and Sandra (Gabriel's mother) and Melanie's mother and all of the school mothers. Who does your own mother most resemble? If you're a mother, which mother do you think is most like you? Is that also your favorite mother in the book? If not, why not?

2. At the beginning of the novel, Gabriel and Melanie have just separated because he's been unfaithful. At the end, they've reunited. Do you think they'll make it? Why or why not? Do you think she should have forgiven him sooner? Or maybe not at all? What's unforgivable when it comes to marriage? Anything?
3. Do you know any kids like Noah --- kids who just "march to the beat of a different drummer"? Do you think adults should try to make them fit in better or let them do their own thing?
4. If you had to describe Rickie, would you say she's tough or vulnerable? Why? Is she a reliable narrator? Can you think of any point in the novel when Rickie is absolutely wrong about something and doesn't realize it for a while?
5. Rickie notices how uncommon it is to have a male teacher in the Fenwick Prep elementary school. Have you noticed this to be the case in your community? Why do you think they tend to be rare?
6. In one scene, Rickie watches as Noah gets up to bat, wishing more than anything that he'll get a base hit --- or even make contact with the ball. Have you ever wanted something for someone else more than you wanted anything in the world for yourself?
7. What do you think of the way Rickie handles Noah's questions about his father? If you were in her boat, would you demand financial or other kinds of support from him?
8. Rickie's mother says toward the end of the novel that sometimes when things go wrong, kids need someone safe to get mad at and that a mother "gives" them that --- lets them get mad at her and forgives them. Do you think that's true? Has that ever played out in your life in some way?

Author Bio

I grew up in Newton, Massachusetts, the youngest of five kids, and went to college about twenty minutes away from home. One of my sisters and my brother were both already enrolled at the same school, so it wasn't exactly a leap into the unknown --- neither was my subsequent move to New York, since two of my sisters and my brother lived there by then. But when I moved to Los Angeles in the mid-1980s, I was finally mapping out some new territory (although my sister Nell joined me seconds later). I thought eventually I'd move back to the east coast. Turns out I was wrong.

Now I live in the Pacific Palisades (a city in Los Angeles, not far from the ocean) and my four kids are growing up true Californians: they wear tank tops and flip-flops and don't even know what a "snow day" is. My husband writes for TV which doesn't impress people all that much until I mention that he worked on "The Simpsons" for a year-and-a-half and then people get really impressed. Especially teenaged type people. Visit my website, <http://clairelazebnik.com/>.

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