ReadingGroupGuides
The online community for reading groups

Leaving Before It's Over

by Jean Reynolds Page



About the Book

From the author of **The Space Between Before and After** comes a compelling novel that explores the true meaning of family.

When Roy Vines married his wife, Rosalind, he traded his family and his inheritance for love --- a painful choice that has blessed them with years of joy nestled in rural North Carolina with their beautiful daughters, 16-year-old Lola and little Janie Ray. But their happiness is threatened when Rosalind suddenly falls ill. Desperate to get her the help she needs, Roy does the one thing he swore he'd never do --- turn to his heartless and bitter identical twin brother, Mont, for help.

The price is steep --- and includes opening their home to a teenage boy who believes Roy is the father who abandoned him. As bad blood threatens to destroy her family, Rosalind must make a difficult choice. Should she walk away --- like Roy once did --- for love, or try to mend wounds that may never be healed? And will the pain of choosing be more than her heart can bear?

Discussion Guide

1. Examples of duality in Roy?s life can be found throughout the book. He is a twin. He lives in a duplex and, in a sense, has had two distinctly different lives --- the life he had with Sherry before he left Virginia and the life he made with Rosalind. How have these physical and emotional realities shaped the kind of person Roy has become?

2. Rosalind?s illness sets the events of the book in motion. Her blood disorder causes her to feel vulnerable and, in many ways, betrayed by her own body. What actions does she take to empower herself in the face of this ordeal? Does she succeed?

3. Rosalind knew that Roy was married when she met him and yet she let herself fall in love. Based on their behavior, would you say Roy committed adultery with her? How has the lingering guilt over their actions affected Rosalind?

4. In a similar fashion, Roy was tortured to find that he desired Rosalind, feelings that ran contrary to his own integrity and principles. Later, it is revealed that Roy?s first marriage was never what it seemed, even to Roy. Do you believe Roy might have sensed something in his relationship with Sherry that gave him permission to love Rosalind, or did he simply allow his heart to override his sense of right and wrong?

5. Rosalind is considered by others to be beautiful, even though she never seems to reflect on this herself. The treatment for her illness will make her less physically attractive for as long as she takes the medication. Does her response to this reveal an underlying insecurity, or even vanity, in Rosalind? How do you think her physical appearance determined her choices in life and the confidence with which she approached them? How might this change when she looks very different?

6. Early on, Lola makes the observation that she lives in ?half of a half-empty duplex.? During the course of the narrative, she gains a ?brother? as well as neighbors next door. How does Lola change as her world expands in this way?

7. After initially opposing Luke?s presence in North Carolina, both Roy and Rosalind eventually decide that they should try to give Luke a home with unconditional support. This contrasts with what Roy believes the boy?s situation has been in Virginia. Do you believe that Roy and Rosalind are truly selfless in this decision? What needs might Luke fulfill in their lives and what does he offer to the family?

8. Mont?s political ambitions form the foundation for his marriage to Della. Based on what is seen of his early life, did this ambition simply take over Mont?s soul or do you believe that he was born a person incapable of love and caring? Do you believe he loves Luke?

9. Nanny is initially portrayed as a person driven by religious zealotry and unchecked ambition for at least one of her sons. As revelations show her actions to be even more outside the realm of normal --- reaching what many would consider true mental illness --- does this increase or decrease sympathy for her as a character?

10. Has Luke?s interaction with Roy?s family reached him in time to influence the kind of adult he will become?

11. In the beginning of the narrative, Mont and Nanny have been deceiving Luke about the identity of his biological father. Later, for very different reasons, Roy and Rosalind continue to perpetuate the lie. Is anyone justified in making this decision, or do you think Luke should have been told that Mont is his father, regardless of the consequences that might follow that revelation?

Author Bio

Jean Reynolds Page is the author of A BLESSED EVENT, ACCIDENTAL HAPPINESS, and THE SPACE BETWEEN BEFORE AND AFTER, among others. She grew up in North Carolina and graduated with a degree in journalism from The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She worked as an arts publicist in New York City and for over a

decade and reviewed dance performances for numerous publications before turning full time to fiction in 2001. In addition to North Carolina and New York, she has lived in Boston and Dallas. She moved with her husband and three children to the Seattle area in 2002.

Leaving Before It's Over

by Jean Reynolds Page

Publication Date: August 10, 2010
Paperback: 368 pages
Publisher: William Morrow Paperbacks
ISBN-10: 0061876925
ISBN-13: 9780061876929