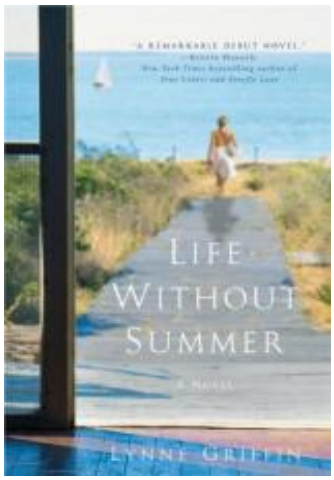
Life Without Summer

by Lynne Griffin



About the Book

Life Without Summer tells the story of Tessa, a mother who has just lost her four-year-old daughter in a hit-and-run accident and the grief counselor, Celia, who tries to help her to put her life back together. When their lives begin to intersect in powerful and unexpected ways, they discover that the answers one needs might be the other?s only chance for peace. Each woman?s intensely personal journey reverberates with universal themes about the connections between love, marriage, truth, and forgiveness that no reader will forget.

Discussion Guide

1. The novel opens with Tessa replaying the accident in her mind, even though she wasn?t there and doesn?t know what transpired before or after Abby dies. Why does she do this to herself? How does not knowing propel the novel forward?

2. Why do you think Tessa secludes herself at home and in Abby?s bed after the accident? Do you think it helps or hurts a grieving person to retreat from the world in this way?

3. What details of mourning a loss --- erecting a roadside memorial, trying to capture a loved one?s scent in clothes, or watching old home movies --- can you relate to? In what ways are these helpful ways to grieve? In what ways aren?t they?

4. Tessa gets caught up in trying to find answers to the many questions she has about what happened to Abby. She keeps things from Ethan, tracks down repeat offenders and comes face-to-face with them. How were you able to reconcile that a grieving woman would do this?

5. Why is Celia able to help Tessa, but not able to take the advice for herself? Why does she find it so hard to deal with her own feelings? Do you think she was always like this? What information does she share in her journal entries that

make you believe she may or may not have been like this in the early days of her marriage to Harry?

6. Tessa keeps her investigation from Ethan. Celia conceals the story of her past from Alden. Harry lies to Celia, and Ian does too. Can you ever reconcile lying to family members? And what does it do to trust, particularly in a marriage?

7. According to Tessa, Celia is ?wound a little tight?. She?s at odds with her ex-husband, Harry; she struggles with her relationships with Ian and her present husband, Alden. Did you find it easy or hard to empathize with Celia? Did this change after you heard about her loss?

8. Can you understand Tessa?s fear of having another child? Do you think she really cares what other people think about her pregnancy? What do you think she?s really afraid of?

9. After Tessa announces she?s pregnant, Celia says, ?As she spoke --- while I listened --- I heard her story echo my own, though it rang in a slightly different key.? Though Tessa and Celia appear so different from one another, what aspects of their stories are the same?

10. In the novel, Tessa keeps Abby?s bedroom untouched and Celia leaves a shelf in her studio exactly as it was ten years ago. What role does the symbols of rooms, and cherished belongings, like Tootsie Rabbit and the birthstone necklace, have in this novel?

11. Tessa trusts her ability to read people. She believes that when she looks into the eyes of each repeat offender, she?ll know who?s responsible. And she?s certain Celia couldn?t have known what happened or she would?ve told her. Why is she so convinced of these things? Why do some people trust their instincts, while others so often miss the things others are trying to tell them?

12. How did you feel when you learned who was responsible for killing Abby? Tessa feels differently --- less angry --- once she learns who did it and the actual circumstances of the accident. Do you think you would experience a change of heart?

13. Would you be able to do what Tessa did at the end of the novel? Did Mirielle play any role in Tessa?s ability to forgive?

14. Does the ending leave you with a sense of hope? Looking beyond the novel, what do imagine happens in the relationship between Tessa and Ethan? Celia and Harry? What happens to Ian?

Author Bio

Lynne Griffin is a nationally recognized expert on family life. She is the author of **Negotiation Generation: Take Back Your Parental Authority Without Punishment** (Berkley/Penguin 2007). As the parenting contributor for Boston?s Fox 25 Morning News, she appears regularly in the segment Family Works. Lynne teaches in the graduate program of Social Work and Family Studies at Wheelock College, and at Grub Street Writers. She lives outside Boston, Massachusetts with her family. **Life Without Summer** is her first novel.

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