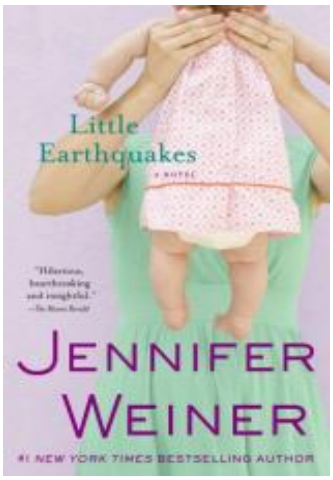
Little Earthquakes: A Novel

by Jennifer Weiner



About the Book

First comes love. Then comes marriage. And then things start to get really interesting...

In **Good in Bed**, Cannie Shapiro conquered public heartbreak and shaky self-esteem. In **In Her Shoes**, Rose and Maggie Feller learned about family secrets and the ties that bind. Now, in Jennifer Weiner's richest, wittiest, most true-to-life novel yet, this highly acclaimed storyteller brings readers a tale of romance, friendship, forgiveness, and extreme sleep deprivation, as three very different women navigate one of life's most wonderful and perilous transitions: the journey of new motherhood.

Rebecca Rothstein-Rabinowitz is a plump, sexy chef who has a wonderful husband, supportive friends, a restaurant that's received citywide acclaim, a beautiful baby girl...and the mother-in-law from hell.

Kelly Day's life looks picture-perfect. But behind the doors of her largely empty apartment, she's struggling to balance work and motherhood and marriage, while entering Oliver's every move (and movement) on a spreadsheet, and dealing with an unemployed husband who seems content to channel-surf for eight hours a day.

And Ayinde Towne is already on shaky ground, trying to live her life to the letter of a how-to guide called **Baby Success** , when her basketball superstar husband breaks her trust at the most vulnerable moment in her life, putting their marriage in peril -- and their new family even more in the public eye.

Then there's Lia Frederick, a Philadelphia native who has just come home, leaving Los Angeles behind, along with her glamorous Hollywood career, her husband, and a tragic secret, to start her life all over again.

With her trademark warmth and humor, Weiner tells the story of what happens after happily ever after...and how an eight-pound bundle of joy can shake up every woman's sense of herself in the world around her.

From prenatal yoga to postbirth sex, from sisters and husbands to mothers and mothers-in-law, **Little Earthquakes** is a frank, funny, fiercely perceptive Diaper Genie-eye view of the comedies and tragedies of love and marriage.

Discussion Guide

1. All four of the women who star in **Little Earthquakes** have complicated relationships with their mothers or mothers-in law. Think about how these relationships affect them and the bonds they develop with their babies. For instance, how do Ayinde's childhood memories and the current dynamics between her and her mother affect the relationship she develops with Julian? Ayinde clearly wants to raise her child differently than her parents raised her, but she also shows she wants to live up to her mother's expectations by taking **Baby Success!** seriously. How do you think this blend of motivations will affect Julian?

2. In **Little Earthquakes**, Ayinde, Kelly, and Becky each take a different approach to raising their baby. Ayinde tries **Baby Success!**; Kelly starts with a type A approach, keeping track of every little detail on spreadsheets and making sure Oliver has the perfect clothes and toys; and Becky goes for a more laid back, all-natural strategy. How do their approaches work out for them? Does any one approach seem to work out better than the others?

3. In the midst of their personal troubles, Becky's friends sometimes have a hard time remembering the ways in which they are fortunate. Kelly, in particular, tends to be scornful when people call her "lucky." But towards the end of the novel, Becky says, "If there was one lesson she'd learned from new motherhood, and from her friends, it was that any bit of good fortune had to be counted as lucky - and that there was always, always someone worse off than you" (398). How does motherhood help put things in perspective for Becky? What does she learn from her friends, and what can we learn by comparing the experiences of each of the four women?

4. Kelly puts a lot of pressure on herself and on Steven to maintain the kind of life she couldn't have growing up. The schedule she tries to maintain is difficult, but it's not that different from the "double shift" of work and chores that many women take on when they have kids. Still, as the article in *Power* magazine read, "if Kelly O'Hara Day, with her smarts and her savvy and her Ivy League degree, can't successfully integrate a career and a family, it doesn't suggest that things for other working mothers are much different -- or that thirty some years after the feminists waged a so-called revolution, the workplace is likely to become a kinder, gentler place for the women who will follow in her footsteps" (441). Do you think Kelly mismanaged her life, or do you think the choices available to working women, are, as the reporter wrote, likely to put any woman in a tough spot? Can women today really have it all, or do they need to choose between having a family and having a career?

5. Both Ayinde and Kelly consider divorce at some point. When Ayinde considers leaving Richard, she thinks of the chapter on divorce in **Baby Success!**: "Marriage on the rocks? Keep your eyes on the prize. Remember what really matters. Remember who comes first. Babies do better with mommy and daddy both under the same roof" (298-9). Is this good advice? Were you surprised that Ayinde patched things up with Richard? Do you think either Ayinde or Kelly should have followed through with a divorce?

6. When Lia flees to Philadelphia, she leaves her husband behind, even though they love each other very much. She says, "Every time he looked at me, he'd see what we had lost; every time I looked at him, I'd see the same thing. I couldn't stay. I couldn't stay and hurt him anymore" (5). Why does Lia assume that her presence is hurting her husband? Where

does her sense of culpability and guilt come from, and how do they complicate her grief? Why does she finally reach out to Sam?

7. After Ayinde learns what's causing Julian's heart murmur, she thinks, "A hole in his heart. It was almost poetic. She'd been walking around for weeks feeling like someone had torn a hole in her own" (354). How does Julian's malady reflect the injury that Ayinde has sustained on an emotional level, and what do his prospects for health and well-being imply about hers and the well-being of her friends, who have each had their own struggles?

8. Kelly's mother, Paula, tries to convince her daughter that covetousness is a sin. She says, "You should be concerned with the state of your soul, not the state of your bank account" (48). Considering the kind of life Kelly had at home, it's not surprising that she doesn't take her mother's advice to heart. Should she have taken her more seriously? Why does Kelly strive so hard to find the perfect accessories? Is she truly covetous? Is she looking for security? Does she wish to appear affluent? Does she appreciate nice things aesthetically? Whatever her motivation is, do you think she will ever be satisfied by the acquisition of objects?

9. Like all of the other characters, Ayinde's life changes dramatically when she has Julian. However, unlike Becky and Kelly, she also finds that she can no longer continue her career, due to her new husband's celebrity. How does Ayinde's sense of self change after she marries and has her baby? Do you think she makes choices for Julian and for herself that she would not have made if she could work? How is her relationship with her husband and baby affected by her decision not to pursue her career?

10. Becky has struggled with body image throughout her life, but her pregnancy seems to draw her attention to her weight more than usual. She had hoped that pregnancy would allow her to relax a little, but instead she finds herself playing "pregnant or just fat?" How does this disappointment and Becky's struggle with body image affect her experience with pregnancy?

11. Similarly, the characters experience numerous aspects of pregnancy and childbirth that they didn't really expect, or with which they were disappointed. Together, they discuss things that surprised them like the unpleasant physical side affects of pregnancy and baby farts, and more serious unexpected problems like Lia's trouble getting Caleb to sleep. Why do you think the characters, many of whom read books like **What to Expect When You're Expecting** or took classes in childbirth and baby care, found themselves confused and surprised so often? How did their expectations of motherhood conflict with reality? Where do you think their expectations came from?

Author Bio

Jennifer Weiner is a #1 *New York Times* bestselling author whose books have spent over five years on the *New York Times* bestseller list, with more than 11 million copies in print in 36 countries.

She is the author of the novels GOOD IN BED (2001); IN HER SHOES (2002), which was turned into a major motion picture starring Cameron Diaz, Toni Collette and Shirley MacLaine; LITTLE EARTHQUAKES (2004); GOODNIGHT NOBODY (2005); the short story collection THE GUY NOT TAKEN (2006); CERTAIN GIRLS (2008); BEST

FRIENDS FOREVER (2009); FLY AWAY HOME (2010); THEN CAME YOU (2011); THE NEXT BEST THING (2012); ALL FALL DOWN (2014); WHO DO YOU LOVE (2015); MRS. EVERYTHING (2019); BIG SUMMER (2020); THAT SUMMER (2021); THE SUMMER PLACE (2022); GOLDEN HILLS (2023); THE BREAKAWAY (2024); and THE GRIFFIN SISTERS' GREATEST HITS (2025).

She is also the author of *The Littlest Bigfoot* middle-grade trilogy: THE LITTLEST BIGFOOT (2016) LITTLE BIGFOOT, BIG CITY (2017), and THE BIGFOOT QUEEN (2023).

Her nonfiction collection, HUNGRY HEART: Adventures in Life, Love, and Writing (2016), was a finalist for the PEN/Diamonstein -Spielvogel Award for the Art of the Essay.

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