ReadingGroupGuides
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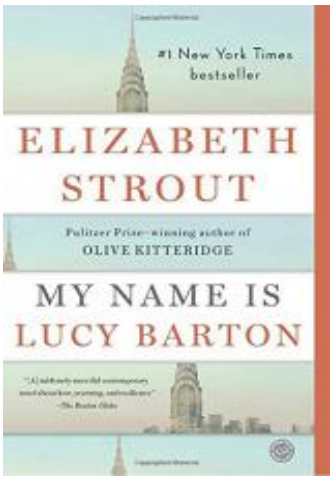
My Name Is Lucy Barton

by Elizabeth Strout



About the Book

#1 *NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLER

LONGLISTED FOR THE MAN BOOKER PRIZE

A simple hospital visit becomes a portal to the tender relationship between mother and daughter in this extraordinary novel by the Pulitzer Prize?winning author of OLIVE KITTERIDGE and THE BURGESS BOYS.

Lucy Barton is recovering slowly from what should have been a simple operation. Her mother, to whom she hasn?t spoken for many years, comes to see her. Gentle gossip about people from Lucy?s childhood in Amgash, Illinois, seems to reconnect them, but just below the surface lie the tension and longing that have informed every aspect of Lucy?s life: her escape from her troubled family, her desire to become a writer, her marriage, her love for her two daughters. Knitting this powerful narrative together is the brilliant storytelling voice of Lucy herself: keenly observant, deeply human and truly unforgettable.

Discussion Guide

1. Lucy?s husband asked her mother to visit her in the hospital, and paid for her trip. Do you think that was a gesture of love on his part?

2. What role does the gossip Lucy and her mother share play in the book?

3. Do you think Lucy blames her mother for the more painful parts of her childhood? Could her mother have done better?

4. WWII and the Nazis are themes that profoundly affect Lucy?s father (and hence her whole family), Lucy?s marriage

to her first husband, and even her dreams. Discuss.

5. Lucy expresses great love for her doctor. How would you describe that love?

6. Lucy?s friend Jeremy told her she needed to be ?ruthless as a writer.? Did she take his advice? How?

7. Why did Lucy keep returning again and again to see the marble statue at the Metropolitan Museum of Art?

8. How has the poverty of Lucy?s childhood shaped her life and her work?

9. What does living in New York City mean for Lucy? Do you think she feels at home in New York?

10. What did Sarah Payne mean, when she said to Lucy: ?We only have one story??

Author Bio

Elizabeth Strout is the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of THE THINGS WE NEVER SAY; TELL ME EVERYTHING, an Oprah's Book Club pick; LUCY BY THE SEA; OH WILLIAM!; OLIVE, AGAIN; ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE, winner of the Story Prize; MY NAME IS LUCY BARTON; THE BURGESS BOYS; OLIVE KITTERIDGE, winner of the Pulitzer Prize; ABIDE WITH ME; and AMY AND ISABELLE, winner of the *Los Angeles Times* Art Seidenbaum Award for First Fiction and the *Chicago Tribune* Heartland Prize. She has also been a finalist for the PEN/Faulkner Award and the Orange Prize in London. She lives in Maine.

Critical Praise

?There is not a scintilla of sentimentality in this exquisite novel. Instead, in its careful words and vibrating silences, MY NAME IS LUCY BARTON offers us a rare wealth of emotion, from darkest suffering to --- ?I was so happy. Oh, I was happy? --- simple joy.?

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Publication Date: October 11, 2016
Genres: Fiction, Women's Fiction
Paperback: 240 pages
Publisher: Random House Trade Paperbacks
ISBN-10: 0812979524
ISBN-13: 9780812979527