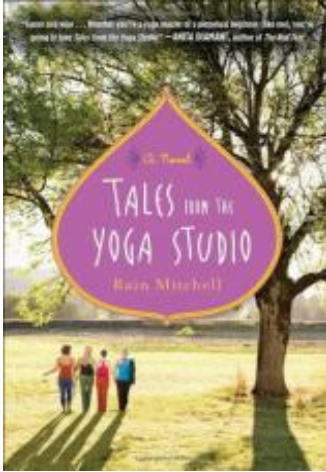


Tales from the Yoga Studio

by Rain Mitchell



About the Book

A sparkling new series introducing five unforgettable women who flock to yoga at turning points in their lives and find the gift of lasting friendship.

The yoga studio is where daily cares are set aside, mats are unfurled, and physical exertion leads to well-being, renewal, and friendship. An aggressively expanding chain of Los Angeles yoga "experience centers," has Lee and her extraordinary teaching abilities in its sights. They woo her with a lucrative contract, a trademarked name for her classes, and a place for her handsome musician husband. But accepting the contract means abandoning the students at the homey studio Lee runs in L.A.'s Silver Lake district --- and leaving behind four women whose friendships are suddenly more important to her than retirement benefits and a salary increase.

Tales from the Yoga Studio is an insider's look at the current obsession with yoga, told with enough humor, wit, and warmth to charm and delight readers, whether or not they've ever done a Downward Dog.

Discussion Guide

1. Tales from the Yoga Studio opens with Lee finishing up teaching a yoga class, pondering the benefits of the practice, and craving a cigarette. How did this first impression of the main character affect the way you viewed her? What kind of tone does it establish for the novel?

2. Lee, like many characters in the novel, comes to yoga during a period of injury --- emotional in her case, physical in the case of other students. What do she and the other characters learn from studying yoga that helps them? Is there something different about the practice of yoga, as described in the novel, from running, lifting weights, and other forms of physical exercise? Have you ever experienced some kind of lasting transformation from following any regular practice in your life?

3. The point of view shifts between each of the five central women in the novel. Did you find yourself most drawn to the attitudes and observations of one character? Were there specific scenes in the novel you wish you had seen from a different character's point of view? Which character did you end up caring about the most?

4. The male characters are much less developed than the female characters. Does this reinforce the stereotype of yoga as primarily practiced by women? To what extent do you think this is true? Why is that, and is it changing? How different would the novel have been if the male characters' points of view had been included?

5. How well did you think the yoga terms were interwoven with the dialogue and description in the novel? Did reading the book give a good idea of what it's like to take yoga classes and to be immersed in the world of yoga? Did it make you want to practice more or to start if you don't already?

6. There's a considerable amount of satire in the novel --- the crowded, sexualized classes, the commercialization and emphasis on appearances. What did you end up feeling were Rain Mitchell's overall attitudes toward yoga?

7. Evaluate the various friendships between the members of Lee's yoga studio. What is it about the practice of yoga that lays the groundwork for their friendships? Do you have "yoga friends" you know only from yoga classes or friends you connect with primarily through some other shared interest?

8. Discuss the way the book deals with the subject of addiction and substance abuse through Katherine, Stephanie, and to some extent, Becky. What is it about yoga that helps them in recovery? Is there some way in which they're merely replacing one addiction with a different one? What did you think of Katherine's client, the one who confesses during a massage that she developed an addiction to "tinctures" and herbal supplements? Is it possible to be addicted to something healthy?

9. Discuss the ways Mitchell deals with the subjects of betrayal and loyalty in the book?not just in the way characters are loyal to one another, or how they betray one another, but also the ways in which characters betray themselves and their ideals (or, conversely, how they stay loyal to their ideals and their sense of self). What are the central messages of the novel concerning loyalty and betrayal? What can we learn through these characters?

10. Compare and contrast the resolution of each character's storyline. Whose "ending" was most satisfying? What is left unresolved in each character's storyline? Do you think Lee and Alan will remain separated? Or that Graciela and Darryl's relationship will take a turn for the worse? (Discuss in particular the scene where Darryl is aggressive in bed after Graciela tells him about the tour.) Will Katherine and Connor develop a lasting relationship? Will Imani be a good mother?

11. Discuss the penultimate paragraph in the book --- which are presented as thoughts inside Lee's head but could also be taken as the author's message to her readers: "There are moments in life when you understand with certainty that no

matter how difficult the immediate future is likely to be, you are going to be able to face it. You are going to walk into it with calm and conviction. You might not get through it unscathed, but you will get through it. Your life isn't the way you thought it would be, but you know for sure you're not alone." How does this paragraph work as a statement of theme for the entire novel? Do you think this is good advice to live by?

Author Bio

Rain Mitchell began practicing yoga as a teenager, and is currently at work on the second novel in the series. Rain's favorite pose is savasana.

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