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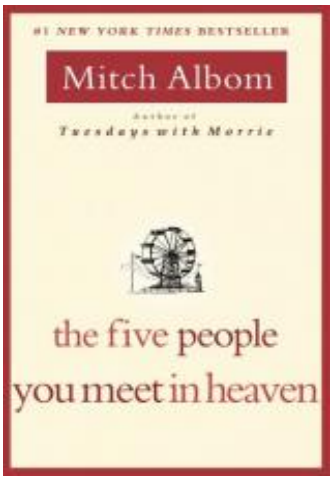
The Five People You Meet in Heaven

by Mitch Albom



About the Book

From the author of the number one *New York Times* bestseller **Tuesdays with Morrie** comes this long-awaited follow-up, an enchanting, beautifully crafted novel that explores a mystery only heaven can unfold.

Eddie is a grizzled war veteran who feels trapped in a meaningless life of fixing rides at a seaside amusement park. As the park has changed over the years -- from the Loop-the-Loop to the Pipeline Plunge -- so, too, has Eddie changed, from optimistic youth to embittered old age. His days are a dull routine of work, loneliness, and regret.

Then, on his 83rd birthday, Eddie dies in a tragic accident, trying to save a little girl from a falling cart. With his final breath, he feels two small hands in his -- and then nothing. He awakens in the afterlife, where he learns that heaven is not a lush Garden of Eden, but a place where your earthly life is explained to you by five people who were in it. These people may have been loved ones or distant strangers. Yet each of them changed your path forever.

One by one, Eddie's five people illuminate the unseen connections of his earthly life. As the story builds to its stunning conclusion, Eddie desperately seeks redemption in the still-unknown last act of his life: Was it a heroic success or a devastating failure? The answer, which comes from the most unlikely of sources, is as inspirational as a glimpse of heaven itself.

In **The Five People You Meet in Heaven**, Mitch Albom gives us an astoundingly original story that will change everything you've ever thought about the afterlife -- and the meaning of our lives here on earth. With a timeless tale, appealing to all, this is a book that readers of fine fiction, and those who loved **Tuesdays with Morrie**, will treasure.

Discussion Guide

1. At the start of **The Five People You Meet in Heaven**, Albom says that "all endings are also beginnings." In general,

what does this mean? How does it relate to this story in particular? Share something in your life that has begun as another thing ended, and the events that followed.

2. What initially grabs your attention in **The Five People You Meet in Heaven**? What holds it?

3. How does counting down the final minutes of Eddie's life affect you as a reader? Why does Albom do this? Other storytelling devices Albom uses include moving from past to present by weaving Eddie's birthdays throughout the story. How do these techniques help inform the story? What information do you learn by moving around in time? How effective is Albom's style for this story in particular?

4. What does Eddie look like and what kind of guy is he? Look at and discuss some of the details and descriptions that paint a picture of Eddie and his place of business. What is it about an amusement park that makes it a good backdrop for this story?

5. Consider the idea that "no story sits by itself. Sometimes stories meet at corners and sometimes they cover one another completely, like stones beneath a river." How does this statement relate to **The Five People You Meet in Heaven**?

6. How does Albom build tension around the amusement park ride accident? What is the significance of Eddie finding himself in the amusement park again after he dies? What is your reaction when Eddie realizes he's spent his entire life trying to get away from Ruby Pier and he is back there immediately after death? Do you think this is important? Why?

7. Describe what Albom's heaven is like. If it differs from what you imagined, share those differences. Who are the five people Eddie meets? Why them? What are their relationships to Eddie? What are the characteristics and qualities that make them the five people for Eddie?

8. Share your reactions and thoughts about the Blue Man's story, his relationship with his father, and his taking silver nitrate. What, if anything, does this have to do with Eddie? Why does he say to Eddie, "This is not your heaven, it's mine"?

9. How does the Blue Man die? What affect does it have on you when you look at the same story from two different points of view -? his and Eddie's? Can you share any events that you have been involved in that can be viewed entirely differently, from another's point of view? How aware are we of other's experiences of events that happen simultaneously to us and to them? Why?

10. Discuss what it means that "That there are no random acts. That we are all connected. That you can no more separate one life from another than you can separate a breeze from the wind." Even though Eddie hasn't been reincarnated, consider karma in Eddie's life (where Eddie's actions would affect his reincarnation). If it isn't karma, what is Albom telling us about life, and death?

11. Think about Eddie's war experiences and discuss your reactions to Albom's evocation of war. What did Eddie learn by being in war? How did he "come home a different man"? Why did the captain shoot Eddie? Explore what it means when the captain tells Eddie, "I took your leg to save your life." Why does the captain tell Eddie that sacrifice is not really a loss, but a gain? Examine whether or not Eddie understands this, and the significance of this lesson.

12. Discuss what you might say to Eddie when he asks "why would heaven make you relive your own decay?".

13. Examine whether or not you agree with the old woman when she tells Eddie, "You have peace when you make it with yourself," and why. Consider what she means when she says, "things that happen before you are born still affect you. And people who come before your time affect you as well." How does this relate to Eddie's life? Who are some who have come before you that have affected your own life?

14. What is Eddie's father's response each time Eddie decides to make an independent move, away from working at the pier? Examine how Eddie's father's choices and decisions actually shape Eddie's life. Why does Eddie cover for his father at the pier when his father becomes ill? What happens then? Share your own experience of a decision your own parents made that affected your life, for better or for worse.

15. Who tells Eddie that "we think that hating is a weapon that attacks the person who harmed us. But hatred is a curved blade. And the harm we do we do to ourselves"? What is the significance of this particular person in Eddie's life? Why is this important for Eddie to understand? Is it important for all of us to understand? Why? Discuss whether or not you agree that, "all parents damage their children. It cannot be helped." How was Eddie damaged?

16. Why does Marguerite want to be in a place where there are only weddings? How does this relate to her own life, and to her relationship and life with Eddie?

17. Discuss why Eddie is angry at his wife for dying so young. Examine what Marguerite means when she says, "Lost love is still love. It takes a different form. You can't see their smile or bring them food or tousle their hair or move them around on the dance floor. But when these senses waken, another heightens. . . . Life has an end. Love doesn't." Why does she say this to Eddie? Do you think he gets it? Discuss whether or not you agree with her, and why.

18. Why does Eddie come upon the children in the river? What does Tala mean when she says "you make good for me"? Discuss whether or not Eddie's life is a penance, and why. What is the significance of Tala pulling Eddie to safety after he dies? Why is it Tala that pulls him to heaven and not one of the other four?

19. What would you say to Eddie when he laments that he accomplished nothing with his life? Discuss what has he accomplished.

20. Briefly recall the five lessons Eddie learns. How might these be important for all of us? Share which five people might meet you in heaven, and what additional or different lessons might be important to your life. Discuss how Albom's **The Five People You Meet in Heaven** has provided you with a different perspective of your life.

Author Bio

Mitch Albom is the author of numerous books of fiction and nonfiction, which have collectively sold more than 42 million copies in 48 languages worldwide. He has written seven #1 *New York Times* bestsellers --- including TUESDAYS WITH MORRIE, the bestselling memoir of all time, which topped the list for four straight years --- award-winning TV films, stage plays, screenplays, a nationally syndicated newspaper column, and a musical. Through his work at the *Detroit Free Press*, he was inducted into both the National Sports Media Association and Michigan Sports halls of

fame and is the recipient of the 2010 Red Smith Award for lifetime achievement.

He founded the nonprofit SAY Detroit, which provides pathways to success for Detroiters in need through major health, housing and education initiatives. He also founded a dessert shop and a gourmet popcorn line to help fund it. Albom operates Have Faith Haiti, a home and school for impoverished children and orphans in Port-au-Prince, which he visits monthly. He lives with his wife, Janine, in Michigan.

Critical Praise

"A books that you find yourself thinking about days...even weeks later, reading favorite sections to others and thinking about how your own actions and choices ripple through life and affect those around you."

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