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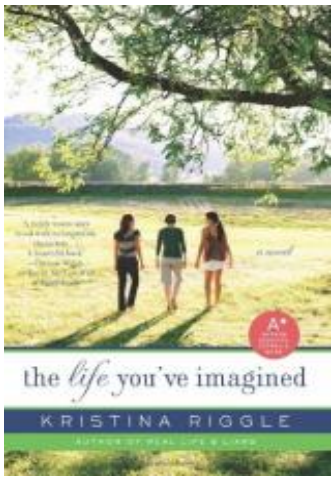
The Life You've Imagined

by Kristina Riggle



About the Book

Is the *life* you're living all you imagined?

Have you ever asked yourself, "What if??" Here, four women face the decisions of their lifetimes in this stirring and unforgettable novel of love, loss, friendship, and family.

Anna Geneva, a Chicago attorney coping with the death of a cherished friend, returns to her "speck on the map" hometown of Haven to finally come to terms with her mother, the man she left behind, and the road she did not take.

Cami Drayton, Anna's dearest friend from high school, is coming home too, forced by circumstance to move in with her alcoholic father?and to confront a dark family secret.

Maeve, Anna's mother, never left Haven, firmly rooted there by her sadness over her abandonment by the husband she desperately loved and the hope that someday he will return to her.

And Amy Rickart --- thin, beautiful, and striving for perfection --- faces a future with the perfect man?but is haunted by the memory of what she used to be.

Kristina Riggle's **The Life You've Imagined** takes a provocative look at the choices we make --- and the courage we must have to change.

Discussion Guide

1. Why do you think Maeve has failed to move on from the store and her marriage?

2. Have you ever felt stuck in the past like Maeve? Were you able to move on? What did you do to get "out of the rut?"

3. Why do you think there's friction between Maeve and Anna? What kinds of issues complicate relationships between mothers and grown daughters?

4. Anna and Beck feel drawn to each other after years apart, and Maeve still pines for herestranged husband, Robert. Do you think old romances can ever come back to life?

5. In continuation of the above question, do you think old romances should ever be revived? Why or why not?

6. How does the absence of Anna's father during her childhood affect her adult life? Did his absence have any positive effects on Anna? What were they?

7. Does a person's past irrevocably color her future?

8. Why do you think Cami comes back to her dad's house despite their history?

9. Have you ever known anyone to remain in a dangerous, abusive situation though it seems obvious they should leave? Why do you think this happens?

10. Amy always strives to control every aspect of her life. Think about this personality trait in terms of her dramatic weight loss: are the two related in some way? What other ways does she try to exact control? Are these actions to her benefit, or detriment?

11. Have you ever made a dramatic, yet positive change to your life, such like Amy made? Were there unexpected downsides to this transition? Why did they arise, do you think?

12. Anna's decision to remain open to the idea of contacting her estranged father. What would you do if you were in Anna's shoes?

13. How did you imagine your life when you were younger? How much is it similar to what you predicted, and is this good or bad?

14. If your life has not turned out the way you wanted it, is it defeatist --- or realistic --- to accept it?

15. The author chose a quote from Thoreau as an epigraph for the novel: "Go confidently in the direction of your dreams, live the life you've imagined." Why do you think she chose this particular quote? What does it mean to you, in light of what happens in the novel?

16. Consider the novel's four main female characters. Is there one that you identify with? Which one, and why?

17. When you first read the novel's title, what did you think the story was going to be about? What does the phrase "The Life You've Imagined" mean to you?

Author Bio

Kristina Riggle lives and writes in West Michigan. Besides her debut novel, REAL LIFE & LIARS, she has published short stories in the *Cimarron Review*, *Literary Mama*, *Espresso Fiction* and elsewhere. She is also a freelance journalist writing primarily for *The Grand Rapids Press*, and co-editor for fiction at *Literary Mama*.

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