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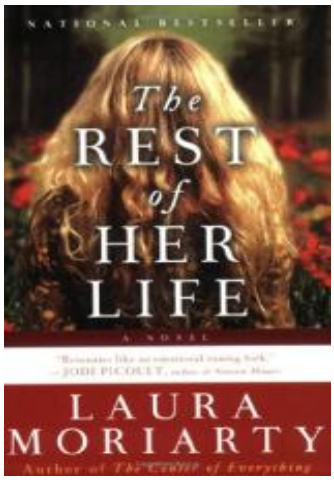
The Rest of Her Life

by Laura Moriarty



About the Book

The Rest of Her Life **is the #1 August 2007 Book Sense pick!**

In **The Rest of Her Life**, Laura Moriarty delivers a luminous, compassionate, and provocative look at how mothers and daughters with the best intentions can be blind to the harm they do to one another.

Leigh is the mother of high-achieving, popular high school senior Kara. Their relationship is already strained for reasons Leigh does not fully understand when, in a moment of carelessness, Kara makes a mistake that ends in tragedy -- the effects of which not only divide Leigh?s family, but polarize the entire community. We see the story from Leigh?s perspective, as she grapples with the hard reality of what her daughter has done and the devastating consequences her actions have on the family of another teenage girl in town, all while struggling to protect Kara in the face of rising public outcry.

Like the best works of Jane Hamilton, Jodi Picoult, and Alice Sebold, Laura Moriarty?s **The Rest of Her Life** is a novel of complex moral dilemma, filled with nuanced characters and a page-turning plot that makes readers ask themselves, ?What would I do??

Discussion Guide

1. Leigh is certainly a flawed human being. But what are her strengths -- as a mother and as a human being? What are her weaknesses? If her weaknesses are a product of her difficult childhood, why is her sister so different?

2. In the course of the novel, the relationship between Leigh and Kara changes. What do you think of as the major turning point in their relationship? What do you think was at the heart of the conflict?

3. How important is the setting to this story? Would the same situation have played out differently in a larger town, a suburb, or a city? What do you think would have been the same?

4. At the beginning of the novel, Leigh believes she likes living in a small town like Danby because she likes the sense of community it offers. Is she really a part of this community? How does Leigh?s relationship to the town change over the summer?

5. When Leigh accuses Eva of being a gossip, Eva defends herself by saying she just cares about what?s happening in the lives of people in her community. Do you buy this? Leigh spends a lot of time worrying about what people are saying about her family, but is gossip ever a positive force in the story? Do you like Eva? Why or why not?

6. After hearing Eva deny being a gossip, Leigh is stunned: *?People didn?t see themselves, she considered. It was almost eerie when you saw it face to face.?* Who else in the novel might not see herself or himself clearly? Does anyone? Do you think of this selective ?vision? as a conscious choice or a true inability?

7. Is Gary a better parent than Leigh? In what ways does his relationship with Justin mirror Leigh?s relationship with Kara? What is it about each child that brings out such different responses from both Gary and Leigh?

8. The first time the bereaved mother confronts Kara, it is Leigh -- not Gary -- who steps in to protect her. Leigh believes she recognizes something in Diane Kletchka, something we can assume Gary does not. What do you think it is about Diane that feels familiar to Leigh?

9. In this novel, we see Leigh in several different kinds of relationships: she's a mother, a daughter, a sister, a wife, and a friend. How do all these different roles compete with each other for Leigh's attention/ loyalty? Does she give too much attention to any one role? Not enough to another? In what ways do these different kinds of relationships influence one another?

Author Bio

Laura Moriarty is the author of the national bestseller THE CHAPERONE, as well as THE CENTER OF EVERYTHING, THE REST OF HER LIFE, WHILE I'M FALLING and SUNLIGHT FINDS YOU. She received her master?s degree from the University of Kansas and was awarded the George Bennett Fellowship for creative writing at Phillips Exeter Academy. Moriarty lives in Lawrence, Kansas.

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