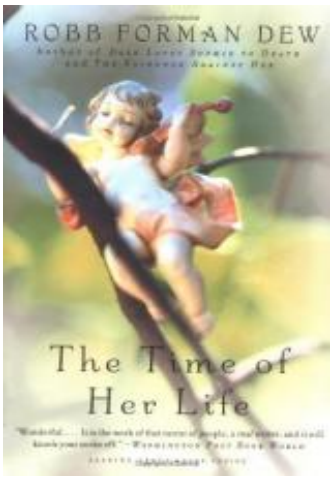
The Time of Her Life

by Robb Forman Dew



About the Book

Claudia and Avery Parks, lovers since high school, are now in their thirties. Intelligent, charming, sympathetic, they seem to be the ideal couple, the perfect dinner-party guests, almost everything people should be-except responsible. They are casually yet cruelly oblivious to the ways in which their words and actions affect other people, most particularly their talented eleven-year-old daughter, who suffers the misfortune of being treated by her parents not as a child but as an equal.

Discussion Guide

1. The novel opens with a description of the weather in the town of Lunsbury, Missouri. Is this significant? What does the weather seem to indicate? Are there other scenes in the novel in which weather seems to play a large role?

2. Claudia Parks is a somewhat enigmatic figure. Do you think she is really as "nihilistic" as Avery implies? Are there in fact things that she cares about? Why do you think she is like this? And why do you think her life revolves so much around Avery?

3. Avery Parks, for all that he tries to distance himself from Claudia, resembles his wife in many ways. What do the house, the book he is writing, his drinking, and his departures tell us about him as a person? Why is he unable either to commit to Claudia completely or to leave her once and for all?

4. Are Avery and Claudia harder or less hard on each other than you think they should be? The word that a psychologist today might use to describe their relationship is codependent. Do you think Avery and Claudia should stay together and try to work things out, or would it be better for them to part ways for good?

5. Jane is a very precocious eleven-year-old, and she is an extraordinary and dedicated violin player. How does this

factor into her relationship with her parents? How has Avery and Claudia's "regard" for their daughter affected her?

6. Do you think Jane feels anything amiss in her family or is it just normal to her? How does her admiration for Maggie Tunbridge and her friendship with Diana Tunbridge influence Jane's relationships at home, if at all?

7. What do you make of the novel's title? Do you think it might refer to more than one "time of her life"?

8. Even after the shocking and violent episode with the violin, Claudia and Avery don't seem to register the meaning of what they've done. What does the ending of the book signify to you? What do you think will happen in the next few months and years?

9. Does the Parks family remind you of any other fictional families? How is their situation better, or worse? How do the novel's specific settings and time periods affect both the life of the Parks family and your assessment of them?

Author Bio

Robb Forman Dew is the author of the novels DALE LOVES SOPHIE TO DEATH, for which she received the National Book Award, THE TIME OF HER LIFE and FORTUNATE LIVES. She also penned the *Washburn Trilogy* (THE EVIDENCE AGAINST HER, THE TRUTH OF THE MATTER and BEING POLITE TO HITLER), which chronicles the evolution of American family life through the 20th century, as well as a memoir, THE FAMILY HEART. She lives in Williamstown, Massachusetts, with her husband, who is professor of history at Williams College and the author of several books of Southern history.

Critical Praise

"Without sentimentality or bitterness, Robb Forman Dew portrays the feral, stray, sly motives wriggling through the foundations of the American home. . . . Once Dew starts up her story, nothing can stop it."

The Time of Her Life
by Robb Forman Dew

Publication Date: May 15, 2003
Paperback: 288 pages
Publisher: Back Bay Books
ISBN-10: 0316890693
ISBN-13: 9780316890694