

The Wedding People

by Alison Espach



About the Book

A propulsive and uncommonly wise novel about one unexpected wedding guest and the surprising people who help her start anew.

It's a beautiful day in Newport, Rhode Island, when Phoebe Stone arrives at the grand Cornwall Inn wearing a green dress and gold heels, not a bag in sight, alone. She's immediately mistaken by everyone in the lobby for one of the wedding people, but she's actually the only guest at the Cornwall who isn't here for the big event. Phoebe is here because she's dreamed of coming for years. She hoped to shuck oysters and take sunset sails with her husband. But she's here without him, at rock bottom, and determined to have one last decadent splurge on herself.

Meanwhile, the bride has accounted for every detail and every possible disaster the weekend might yield—except for, well, Phoebe and Phoebe's plan --- which makes it that much more surprising when the two women can't stop confiding in each other.

By turns absurdly funny and devastatingly tender, Alison Espach's *THE WEDDING PEOPLE* is ultimately an incredibly nuanced and resonant look at the winding paths we can take to places we never imagined --- and the chance encounters it sometimes takes to reroute us.

Discussion Guide

Please note: In order to provide book clubs with the most informed and thought-provoking questions possible, it is necessary to reveal aspects of the story, as well as the ending. If you have not finished reading *THE WEDDING PEOPLE*, you may want to wait before reviewing this guide.

1. What is your favorite part of attending a wedding --- the ceremony, the food, the activities or the guests? Which

wedding moments from the book stood out to you most?

2. Imagine if your wedding lasted a whole week! Where would you be, and what sort of activities would you plan?
3. What is the craziest thing you ever saw at a wedding? How do some of the scenes in *THE WEDDING PEOPLE* relate to experiences that you have had attending a wedding of your close friends or family?
4. Have you ever had a chance encounter similar to the way Phoebe and Lila did? What was that like? Did it have any similarities to the start of Phoebe and Lila's relationship? Do you still have a relationship with that person?
5. Try naming all the literary icons scattered throughout *THE WEDDING PEOPLE*. Which author do you think had the closest correlation to Phoebe?
6. How did you feel when Matt showed up at the hotel? Were you expecting it? Why or why not?
7. In what ways does *THE WEDDING PEOPLE* reflect cultural or societal attitudes towards weddings and marriage? Does it challenge or reinforce traditional views? Do you think each of the character perspectives change over the course of the novel? If so, how?
8. Have you ever had to fill in for a wedding party spot like Phoebe does when she steps in for Lila's Maid of Honor? What was that experience like? Did you feel equipped for the job?
9. If you could be one of the wedding people, which person would you be and why?
10. Phoebe and Gary grow close throughout the novel. What do you think about this relationship, and do you think it will continue in the future? Why or why not?
11. Early in the novel, it's mentioned that literature tends to have circular endings, and the endings are always a reflection of the beginning. What's the biggest change for Phoebe, Lila, Gary and Matt by the end? Would you consider the book to have a circular ending? If so, how?

Author Bio

Alison Espach is the author of the novels *THE ADULTS*, a *New York Times* Editors' Choice and a Barnes & Noble Discover pick; *NOTES ON YOUR SUDDEN DISAPPEARANCE*, which was named a best book of 2022 by the *Chicago Tribune* and NPR; and *THE WEDDING PEOPLE*. Her short stories and essays have appeared in *McSweeney's*, *Vogue*, *Outside*, *Joyland* and other places. She is a professor of creative writing at Providence College in Rhode Island.

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