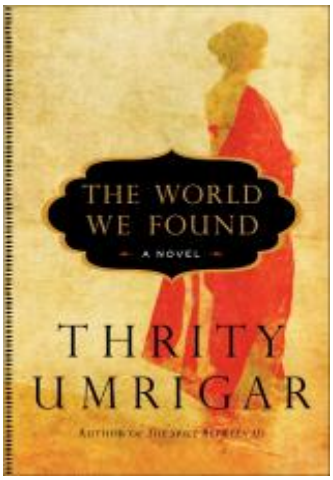
ReadingGroupGuides
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The World We Found

by Thrity Umrigar



About the Book

The acclaimed author of **The Space Between Us** and **The Weight of Heaven** returns with a breathtaking, skillfully wrought story of four women and the unbreakable ties they share.
As university students in late 1970s Bombay, Armaiti, Laleh, Kavita, and Nishta were inseparable. Spirited and unconventional, they challenged authority and fought for a better world. But much has changed over the past thirty years. Following different paths, the quartet drifted apart, the day-to-day demands of work and family tempering the revolutionary fervor they once shared.

Then comes devastating news: Armaiti, who moved to America, is gravely ill and wants to see the old friends she left behind. For Laleh, reunion is a bittersweet reminder of unfulfilled dreams and unspoken guilt. For Kavita, it is an admission of forbidden passion. For Nishta, it is the promise of freedom from a bitter fundamentalist husband. And for Armaiti, it is an act of acceptance, of letting go on her own terms even if her ex-husband and daughter do not understand her choices.

In the course of their journey to reconnect, Armaiti, Laleh, Kavita, and Nishta must confront the truths of their lives --- acknowledge long-held regrets, face painful secrets and hidden desires, and reconcile their idealistic past and their compromised present. And they will have to decide what matters most, a choice that may just help them reclaim the extraordinary world they once found.

Exploring the enduring bonds of friendship and the power of love to change lives, and offering an unforgettable portrait of modern India --- a nation struggling to bridge economic, religious, gender, and generational divides --- **The World We Found** is a dazzling masterwork from the remarkable Thrity Umrigar.

Discussion Guide

1.THE WORLD WE FOUND is the story of four close friends --- Armaiti, Kavita, Laleh, and Nishta --- separated by time and the detours of life. Compare and contrast the four friends both as students and as adults. What does their friendship mean to them? What is the significanceof Armaiti in each of these women's lives?

2.Explain the meaning of the novel's title, THE WORLD WE FOUND. How is it reflected in the book's themes and its characters?

3.How have the lives of these women changed? As young university students, all had dreams for the future. How did reality match with those young dreams? Why did things work out --- or not --- for each of them? What dreams did you have in childhood and youth? How do they compare to the reality of your life today?

4.As students, the quartet fought to change their homeland. Describe their India then and now. Is today's India the kind of place they demonstrated, marched, and argued for? What happened to their activist spirit? What is activism? Were the women still socially involved and aware at middle age? Can we ever escape the compromises that threaten our values? How do we hold onto our idealism in the face of change, or must it inevitably fade, as youth does?

5.When Kavita and Laleh visit Nishta early in the novel, she confesses to them, 'I don't usually feel sorry for myself. It's just that seeing both of you is reminding me of the gap between my life as it is and what I'd dreamed it would be.' How do we reconcile ourselves to those gaps? How can we bridge them? How did these characters?

6.The four friends harbor secrets large and small. What are they and how have they affected each of their lives? What happens when those secrets are revealed?

7.Armaiti shocks and angers everyone when she decides not to endure chemo, arguing that she 'must live on my own terms.' What do you think of her decision? Her daughter calls her selfish. Is she, or is her daughter selfish for not understanding her wishes?

8.All those years ago Nishta was proud to have a Muslim boyfriend and then husband. Does she still feel that way? What has her love for Iqbal given her? What has it cost her?

9.Talk about Kavita. What holds her back from embracing who she is? Are her fears justified? How does her silence shape her life? What motivates her to break free of her fear?

10. What are your impressions of Laleh? Why is it so important for her to gather her friends and visit Armaiti in America? Has she changed the most --- or the least --- of the four friends?

11. Do you agree with the women's plan to intervene in Nishta's life? By saving Nishta, were they saving a part of themselves as well?

Author Bio

Thrity Umrigar is the bestselling author of such novels as HONOR, which was a Reese's Book Club pick, as well as three picture books and a memoir. Her books have been published in over 20 countries and in several languages. A former journalist, she has contributed to the *Washington Post*, the *Boston Globe*, the *New York Times*, the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*

and other newspapers. She is a recipient of the Nieman Fellowship to Harvard, and winner of the Cleveland Arts Prize, the Seth Rosenberg prize and a Lambda Literary award. She is currently a Distinguished University Professor of English at Case Western Reserve University.

Critical Praise

"Umrigar renders a vivid portrait of modern-day India as she meditates upon the power of friendship, loyalty, and love. Like her previous works, **The World We Found** is eloquent and evocative, bitter and sweet."

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Publication Date: January 3, 2012
Genres: Fiction
Hardcover: 320 pages
Publisher: Harper
ISBN-10: 0061938343
ISBN-13: 9780061938344