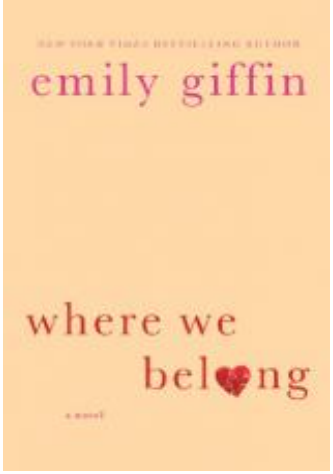
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Where We Belong

by Emily Giffin



About the Book

Marian Caldwell is a 36-year-old television producer, living her dream in New York City. With a fulfilling career and satisfying relationship, she has convinced everyone, including herself, that her life is just as she wants it to be. But one night, Marian answers a knock on the door...only to find Kirby Rose, an 18-year-old girl with a key to a past that Marian thought she had sealed off forever. From the moment Kirby appears on her doorstep, Marian?s perfectly constructed world --- and her very identity --- will be shaken to its core, resurrecting ghosts and memories of a passionate young love affair that threaten everything that has come to define her.

For the precocious and determined Kirby, the encounter will spur a process of discovery that ushers her across the threshold of adulthood, forcing her to re-evaluate her family and future in a wise and bittersweet light. As the two women embark on a journey to find the one thing missing in their lives, each will come to recognize that where we belong is often where we least expect to find ourselves --- a place that we may have willed ourselves to forget, but that the heart remembers forever.

Discussion Guide

1. One of the themes in **Where We Belong** is what happens when we keep secrets. Discuss the reasons people keep secrets. Describe the secrets in this book and the reasons various characters had for keeping them. Do you think secrets and lies are one in the same? How do the characters in the novel accept or come to terms with the secrets they?ve kept or the ones that have been kept from them?

2. Who lost the most because of secrets: Conrad, Kirby, or Marian? Conversely, who gained the most when the secrets were exposed? Who do you think is the most honest character in the book?

3. What do you think of the secret Marian?s parents kept from her? What do you think that says about their marriage and

their respective relationships with her?

4. Why does Kirby decide to find her birth mother? Does she find what she is seeking? How would this book have been different if Kirby found her mother working in a blue-collar job in the suburbs? How would this book have been different if Kirby had been a boy? Do you think that Kirby?s disappointment in her parents at the beginning of the book is justified, or is she simply experiencing typical ?teen angst??

5. Kirby and Marian both change over the course of this story. What are the most significant ways they?ve changed? What risks do they each take? Was there any decision or action you disagreed with on the part of Marian or Kirby?

6. What is your opinion of Peter and Marian?s relationship with Peter? Did you want their relationship to succeed? Do you think Peter was unfair to Marian?or overly harsh in his judgment of her? Do you think Peter loves Marian, or does he simply love how perfectly she fits into his well-managed life? Who did you like more?Peter or Conrad? How are the two men alike and different?

7. Discuss the issue of forgiveness in the book. Which character has the most to forgive? Do you think Conrad will ever be able to fully forgive Marian? Has Marian forgiven her parents? Has Kirby forgiven hers?

8. What role did Marian's friends have in the book? Were they influential in shaping either her identity or her decisions? How did Marian?s secrets impact her friendships?

9. What would you describe as the turning point in Kirby and Marian?s relationship? What do you see as the turning point in Kirby?s relationship with her mother?

10. Are people more influenced by their genes or their upbringing? How does this question relate to the events in the novel? How do you think the various characters in this book might define family?

11. Was Marian a sympathetic character? On balance, did you have empathy for her or feel frustration with her? Do you see her decision to give Kirby up for adoption as selfish or noble?

12. What is the role of motherhood in this novel? What do you think of Marian?s mother? Kirby?s mother? Do you think Marian will have a family of her own? If so, do you think she will be a good mother? Who do you think is the best mother in the book?

13. Discuss the importance of fathers in the book. How are Kirby and Marian?s fathers alike and different? How are their relationships with their fathers different than their relationships with their mothers? Do you think mother-daughter relationships are more complicated than father-daughter relationships?

Author Bio

Emily Giffin is the bestselling author of 13 novels: SOMETHING BORROWED, SOMETHING BLUE, BABY PROOF, LOVE THE ONE YOU'RE WITH, HEART OF THE MATTER, WHERE WE BELONG, THE ONE &

ONLY, FIRST COMES LOVE, ALL WE EVER WANTED, THE LIES THAT BIND, MEANT TO BE, THE SUMMER PACT and LOVE YOU MORE. She lives in Atlanta with her family and two dogs.

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