



Book Club in a Bag

Discussion Questions

“The Widow” by Fiona Barton

1. Discuss the structure of the book. What is the effect of alternating between the perspectives of the Widow, the Reporter, the Detective and the Mother? How did this narrative structure impact your reading of the novel and your opinions about the various characters and events?
2. What do you think finally pushed Jean into telling her story? Do you think she wanted to tell her story all along? If so, what held her back?
3. What did you think of Kate’s investigative methods? How does her presence in the story affect how it unfolds? Do you think the media help or hinder the police during crime investigations?
4. Bella’s disappearance captivated the public’s attention. Why do you think people were so interested in this crime and the people involved?
5. Do you think Jean was as ignorant about her husband’s actions as she claimed to be? Why do you think that she stood by him through the investigation and trial? If you were in her shoes, what would you have done? What might you have done differently?
6. Discuss the role that addiction and obsession play in the novel. How are the characters defined by their addictions and obsessions?
7. This novel poses some difficult questions about moral choices, as the lines between guilt and innocence are repeatedly blurred. Do you think Jean is justified in doing any of the things she does throughout the book? If so, which ones?
8. Jean is not always completely truthful. How reliable is she as a narrator? Identify moments where you trusted her and moments where you doubted her.
9. Discuss the story’s ending. Were you surprised by Jean’s revelations? Did you think that the ending would turn out the way that it did? If not, what didn’t you see coming?

The above questions were taken from Penguin Random House (2016). Reader’s Guide: The Widow. <http://www.penguin.com/read/book-clubs/the-widow/9781101990261>

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