



RAIN
Leigh K Cunningham

Gold medal, Indie Excellence Book Awards
(Literary Fiction)

Silver medal, Independent Publisher Book
Awards (IPPYs) (Australia/NZ Fiction)

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Family saga, Literary Fiction

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BOOK CLUB DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. What are some of the themes in RAIN? How important are they?
2. How realistic was the characterization? Would you want to meet any of the characters and if so, what would you say to them?
3. Were the actions and responses of the characters in their various situations plausible?
4. What major emotion did the story evoke in you?
5. Did any of the characters make you cry and if so, why?
6. RAIN began in the early sixties – were attitudes and practices consistent with the time in your opinion?
7. Did you get a real sense of the Australian setting and the way of life in a small regional town?
8. What passage or storyline in RAIN stood out for you?
9. Did you learn something from RAIN you did not know before?
10. Did the story pull you in or did you have to force yourself to read it?
11. At what point in RAIN did you decide if you liked it or not?
12. Did RAIN end the way you expected?

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

1. Did the marriage of Helena and Michael ever have a chance? Why or why not?
2. Poverty and violence filled Michael's childhood – did this contribute to the man/husband/father he became? Can you empathize with him despite his actions as an adult because of his upbringing?
3. Did Michael's fathering contribute to the decline of William and Brian? Was Helena to blame, and if so, what could she have done differently given the era?
4. If the Baden family (parents with four young children) lived today, would life for any or all of them have turned out differently because of the resources and information available now (on parenting for example) but not then?
5. As a surviving child (like both Helena and Carla), would you feel a need to compensate for your parents loss?
6. When we are introduced to Helena in Chapter 1, we learn she has a plan to shift the 'resilient mass on her hips and thighs'. This battle continues throughout RAIN until her illness at the end. Was she destined to have weight problems because her mother, Millie, was an exceptional cook and Helena simply enjoyed food or was it more than that?
7. Grace and Helena are sisters but could not be more dissimilar, with different aspirations and values. The enduring ties that connect siblings forever did not keep them together – was this because of those differences or the interventions of life or both?
8. Matthew believed the Baden family was cursed and nothing good would ever come to any of its members. Is this a rational thought? Does this explain his solitary life and career choice or are they more to do with being rejected by his father as a child, and as an adult? Is there any possible way for Matthew's view on the world to change?
9. In Chapter 39 when Carla returns to Maine after university she explains this decision with: "Helena was all alone, and unlike her brother, Carl was not a runner." But when Ethan died, Carla quit her life and returned to Orchard Road to live with her mother. She then moved into a monastery before volunteering in Luanda, Angola. Is she also a runner or was she just trying to find a place where she could live more comfortably with her pain?
10. When Helena is diagnosed with Alzheimer's, Carla and Matthew return home from their overseas postings to care for her. Why do they do this? Is it out of love, compassion, obligation, duty, or guilt? Would you expect children in today's families to do likewise?
11. RAIN is a story about loss and finding a way to survive the aftermath? All of us in our lives will lose someone we love dearly. Whose reaction do you think most closely fits how you would react to such a loss? Consider: Millie when her son, Robert, disappears age 12. Helena losing her father, and each of her two sons. Michael losing his mother/grandmother. William losing his brother, Brian. Carla losing Ethan. Does guilt play a major part in each of these?
12. Is there a future for Carla and Simeon?