

THE WOMAN NEXT DOOR

READING GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. Four women live in the cul de sac in this book. Which of them is the woman next door?
2. Discuss the central theme of this book. Is it trust? Communication? Fidelity?
3. Infertility treatments have become common in our culture today. Did you find the depiction of Amanda's experience to be accurate? Is the onus of conception unduly put on the woman? What is the emotional effect of a woman wanting a baby but being unable to conceive?
4. Russ was a journalist working at home while his wife, Georgia, travelled often for business. How did this affect their relationship? How did it affect their children? Do you think that the closeness of the cul-de-sac helped this couple?
5. Karen had known about her husband's infidelity for years. Why did she stay with him? Should she have left? Did you find her too submissive? Do you think that her way of dealing with her husband's infidelity is an exception or the norm, in real life?
6. Amanda and Graham come from very different places. What is the basis of their attraction? In what ways are their families different? In what ways do their families intrude upon their marriage? How did Amanda and Graham handle that? Have in-laws ever been a pressure in your own life? Did you handle it differently from Graham and Amanda?
7. Rumor is a character in *The Woman Next Door*. Discuss what part it plays. Have you ever had a personal experience in which rumor played an important role?
8. Gretchen is the outsider of the neighborhood. Should she have done more to build ties with the other women? In what ways does she alienate them? Why does she do this?
9. Jordie Cotter had issues both on the surface and beneath it. Discuss them. Are they typical of teenagers today?
10. The local newspaper made a front page headline of Quinn Davis's suspension from school. Do you think that had anything to do with Quinn's subsequent actions? Does the media have a responsibility in this regard? Cite examples from things you have seen where the media becomes the story.
11. Amanda's job entailed dealing with emergencies. Was she right in putting these emergencies before her time with her husband? Was Graham justified in resenting this? Compare this with Amanda's reaction when Graham had a last minute meeting. Does a double standard still exist?
12. Graham was married once before he met Amanda. How did the nature of that first marriage and its dissolution affect him? How did it affect his relationship with Amanda?

13. Did Graham grow as a husband during the course of this story? If so, in what ways? How about Russ? Lee?
14. Consider Amanda's attending Graham's family celebration when she was still reeling from Quinn Davis's death. Why did she go? Was she a good sport? A masochist? Simply an obedient wife? What role does respect play in a spouse's relationship with his or her in-laws? What is its limit?
15. Discuss the evolution of Amanda's relationship with Gretchen. Where do you think it will head, once the book is done?
16. Was Gretchen right in naming her baby Benjamin?