

Discussion Questions for The Lost Husband by Katherine Center

Introduction: What about Women's Fiction?

1. **Women's fiction** is an umbrella term for books that are marketed to female readers, and includes many mainstream novels, romantic fiction, "chick lit," and other sub genres. It is distinct from Women's writing, which refers to literature written by (rather than promoted to) women. There exists no comparable label in English for works of fiction that are marketed to males.
2. **What are the key characteristics of a women's fiction novel?**
Women's fiction embraces themes that revolve around the home, family, and community. Often, women's fiction asks that characters overcome staggering real-life challenges—divorce, cancer, job loss, betrayal, etc.
3. **What is the difference between Romance books and Chick Lit books**

Romance novels are books that feature a relationship arc which results in a positive ending, often described as 'happily ever after' (HEA). This relationship is the main focus of the story—one woman, one man, and their hurdle-ridden journey toward finding true and lasting love. In addition to this relationship arc, a romance will also contain one or more subplots (a.k.a. plot devices, the themes of which are various and sundry) that help to bring about the female protagonist's individual character growth.

Chick lit books focus on a female protagonist and her personal (and usually foible-filled) journey toward self-understanding and self-acceptance. In these books, the plot devices are the story. Whether the protagonist ends up with a man is not as relevant as the learning process she experiences through various situations that culminate in her resolving her issues, be they emotional, professional, etc. Chick lit is as famous for its upbeat, emotionally satisfying ending as romance fiction is for its heart.

Information from Wikipedia and booksandpals.blogspot.com

General Questions

1. Looking at the different genres in Women's Fiction, where would you put *The Lost Husband*?
2. What moments in the novel have made you decide you like or dislike it? Did your opinion of the book change as you read it? Did you finish it?
3. Which character did you like the most? Which did you like the least? Discuss. Do the characters seem real and believable? Can you relate to their predicaments?
4. What is the book about? Does it have a central theme or several themes? What are the major conflicts in the story?
5. What are you having the most trouble imagining and can't wrap your head around?
6. Pretend you're the author's editor. What notes would you give her? What would you ask the author if you were interviewing her?

Questions from the author:

1. Libby worries a lot about her children. Why does she do this? Is it too much? Is it reasonable?
2. Libby's relationship with her mother is very fraught with difficulty. What would be hard about having Marcia for a mother? What baggage does Libby still carry from her childhood? Would there be any upsides to being raised by Marcia?
3. Aunt Jean surprises Libby in a lot of ways. What are some of the biggest surprises about who Aunt Jean is? In what ways is she good for Libby and the kids? Are there ways in which she makes things harder? How might Libby's life have been different if she'd been able to keep a relationship with Jean all along?
4. O'Connor is a pretty gruff co-worker. How does Libby respond to him? Where does his gruffness come from? How is meeting Libby – and the kids – good for him? How does spending time with Libby affect him?
5. Bullying is a persistent issue that runs through the story. What do you think about how O'Connor handles PeePants Gaveski? What about the advice and training he gives Abby?
6. Atwater is a town that provides Libby with many lessons about life. What are some of the things it teaches her?

Questions from the author received in an email from Katherine Center. Other sources include: Wikipedia, bookbrowse.com/bookclubs/advice, eddieplayfair.com, bookish.com, barnesandnoble.com/blog/bookclubquestionseveryonecananswer, barnesandnoble.com/blog/introvertsguestionstobeingabookclubof1