

The Year of Magical Thinking by Joan Didion

Discussion Questions

Choose 2 or 3 of these questions that you would like to answer.

- How do the long quotations from different sources (medical texts, etiquette books) affect the tone and meaning of the book?
- Where is the place of love in this book in which the word “love” is hardly mentioned?
- How does Didion as a writer interact with the nurses and doctors at the hospital? What do these interactions say about Didion, on one hand, and the hospital system on the other hand?
- Discuss the notion of “magical thinking”. Have you ever experienced anything like this, after a loss or some other life-changing occurrence? How did it help or hinder your healing?
- Consider the tone Didion uses throughout the book, one of relatively cool detachment. Clearly, she is in mourning, and yet her anguish is quite muted. How did this detached tone affect your reading experience?
- One word critics have used time and time again in describing this book is “exhilarating”. Did you find it to be so, Why or why not?
- The lifestyle described in this book is quite different from the way most people live, yet none of that spared Didion from experiencing profound grief. Did her seemingly privileged life color your feelings about the book at all? Did that change the reading of it?
- Is there a turning point in the book? If so, where would you place it and why?
- The last sentence of the book is “No eye is on the sparrow but he did tell me that.” What does that mean?