

The Forgotten Roses by Deborah Doucette

Book Club Discussion Questions

SYNOPSIS: Rebecca Griffin has everything she could ever want – or so says her big-hearted, opinionated Italian-American family. But now her marriage is unraveling and her teenage daughter is hurtling toward self-destruction. While Rebecca struggles to hang onto her husband and save her daughter, she learns of the mysterious death of a young woman long ago at a local prison. As Rebecca’s mother, Eva, reveals their family’s connection to the girl, Rebecca is drawn into the story – it haunts her. A search for answers takes Rebecca from her small idyllic New England town, to the congested streets of East Boston and the tight-knit Italian neighborhood where most of her family still resides. As she tries to dig up the facts of the young girl’s life and violent death, the puzzle pieces in Rebecca’s life begin to take shape and she faces the difficult truth about her husband, Drew. Rebecca, her troubled daughter, Dana, and an enigmatic figure from the past, unknowingly embark on a collision course one desperate autumn night when the answers they seek come to light in the most forgotten of places from the most innocent of messengers.

1. At the outset the protagonist, Rebecca Griffin, seems stuck and unsettled. What is the turning point that begins to push her forward
2. Rebecca’s family and culture has had an enormous influence on her, in both good ways and bad. Her upbringing had essentially created a blueprint for living. What are the ways in which they have held her back, and the ways in which they have strengthened her.
3. What are the parallels between each of the main characters’ – Rebecca, Dana and Serena – journeys.
4. How have Rebecca’s past choices affected her children’s choices and behavior? And what legacy does she leave them in the end?
5. How does this quote resonate with you in your own life: “We unwittingly fashion our futures from the patterns of our past.”

6. In this day and age, is there a clear difference between a “good girl” and a “bad girl” or are the lines “blurred” as the pop song suggests? Are there good girls and bad girls in the story?

7. One of the elements in the story is the historical and systematic attempt to manipulate the “moral reform” of girls and women in society. (Although not mentioned by name in the book, the Magdalena Asylums are a good example of that). Was it a shock to learn that not long ago a young woman could be incarcerated for “shaming her family?” Do you feel inequities in the justice system exist today for women?

8. In the end, there were no definitive answers regarding Deitzhoff’ and the goings on at the log cabin. The characters had to make choices without the benefit of the clear-cut information they sought. Was this lack of neatly tied-up loose-ends troubling, or merely a fact of life?