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Johnston Public Library Book Discussion Questions

The Book That Matters Most by Ann Hood

Summary

Ava's twenty-five-year marriage has fallen apart, and her two grown children are pursuing their own lives outside of the country.

Ava joins a book group, not only for her love of reading but also out of sheer desperation for companionship. The group's goal throughout the year is for each member to present the book that matters most to them.

Ava rediscovers a mysterious book from her childhood—one that helped her through the traumas of the untimely deaths of her sister and mother.

Alternating with Ava's story is that of her troubled daughter Maggie, who, living in Paris, descends into a destructive relationship with an older man.

Ava's mission to find that book and its enigmatic author takes her on a quest that unravels the secrets of her past and offers her and Maggie the chance to remake their lives.

Discussion Questions

1. Ava's reason for joining a book club is for "the comfort of people who wanted nothing more than to sit together and talk about books." Does that sum up your own reasons for joining (or perhaps forming) your own club? Do you have other reasons (other than the wine)?
2. Aside from her broken marriage, what other emotional baggage does Ava carry with her? How do some members of the group dredge up her feelings of inadequacy?
3. If your club decided to choose the books that matter most to each of you, what books might show up on the list?
4. What about the books on Ava's club's list—*Pride and Prejudice*, *Gatsby*, *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*, *Mockingbird*, among others? Anne Hood extracts something pertinent to Ava out of each book. Talk about some of those relevant points: which do you find most insightful? Do any

resonate with your own life? Do you find some of them simplistic or shallow, perhaps even schmaltzy?

5. Ava is flummoxed by the assignment. "She couldn't remember the last book she'd read that mattered at all. In fact, she purposely chose books that didn't matter." Why do you think she ignored books that had any significance to her?
6. Discuss *From Clare to Here*, the (fictional) book that Ava finally settles on. What does it mean to Ava, and what does the fact that she chose it reveal about her?
7. The author juxtaposes Ava's improving situation with her daughter Maggie's descent into addiction. What does the author gradually reveal about Maggie? Why is Maggie the way she is?
8. *The Book That Matters Most* makes the case for the power of literature to transform us. In what way is Ava transformed? Has a book ever transformed you? If so, in what way?

Summary from the publisher. Discussion Questions from www.litlovers.com.