



6700 Merle Hay Road, Johnston, IA 50131 • Voice: 515-278-5233 • Fax: 515-278-4975 • info@johnstonlibrary.com

Johnston Public Library Book Discussion Questions

Seven Days of Us by Francesca Hornak

Summary

A warm, wry, sharply observed debut novel about what happens when a family is forced to spend a week together in quarantine over the holidays...

It's Christmas, and for the first time in years the entire Birch family will be under one roof. Even Emma and Andrew's elder daughter — who is usually off saving the world — will be joining them at Weyfield Hall, their aging country estate. But Olivia, a doctor, is only coming home because she has to. Having just returned from treating an epidemic abroad, she's been told she must stay in quarantine for a week ... and so too should her family.

For the next seven days, the Birches are locked down, cut off from the rest of humanity — and even decent Wi-Fi — and forced into each other's orbits. Younger, unabashedly frivolous daughter Phoebe is fixated on her upcoming wedding, while her older sister, Olivia, deals with the culture shock of being immersed in first-world problems.

Their father, Andrew, sequesters himself in his study writing scathing restaurant reviews and remembering his glory days as a war correspondent. But his wife, Emma, is hiding a secret that will turn the whole family upside down.

In close proximity, not much can stay hidden for long, and as revelations and long-held tensions come to light, nothing is more shocking than the unexpected guest who's about to arrive.

Discussion Questions

1. Is there one character you relate to more than any other in this story? If so, why?
2. How well do you think Francesca Hornak captures the family dynamic of a week in quarantine over the holidays?
3. Do you think it was better/right for Andrew to conceal his one-off infidelity with Jesse's mother? Or should he have spoken up and told Emma at the time?

4. Why did Olivia stay away from her family for so long? Have you ever experienced the feeling of not being able to be yourself with your family?
5. Discuss the sibling rivalry between Olivia and Phoebe. Why do you think we, as adults, fall into old roles when home with family? Have you experienced this?
6. What do you think kept Phoebe and George together for six years?
7. Did you empathize with the way each character reacted to Jesse's surprise arrival? Did you empathize with Jesse?
8. Is there a moral lesson that each character takes away with them at the end of the story? If so, what is that lesson?
9. What are the main themes in the story?
10. Do you like the way the story is told from multiple points of view?
11. The end is tinged with tragedy and hope. How did the ending affect you?
12. What do you imagine or hope would happen next for each of the members of the Birch family after the closing pages of the book?

Summary and Discussion Questions from the publisher.