

Southfield Public Library

The Unthinkable by Amanda Ripley

Discussion questions used at November 13 & 14, 2018

1. The author talks about the survival arc, what is your understanding of this concept? Have you ever experienced or witnessed the survival arc? (Denial, Deliberation and Decision making)
2. What happens to us in the midst of a disaster? After reading this book, do you feel like you have a better understanding to this question?
3. Why do some people handle themselves better in a disaster than others?
4. Define disaster. Have you been in a disaster? If so, describe why you think you survived.
5. The feeling of dread when properly tapped can save our lives as the author states on page 42. What are your thoughts about this emotional response to a major life occurrence? Can the feeling of dread save someone's life?
6. After reading Ripley's list of how to boost your survival odds, do you agree with them? Is there one tip that you will remember that is achievable for you to do?
7. A repeated theme throughout the book is repetition, train your brain so that you can overcome those physiology and psychological things in order to survive. Ripley states that being prepared when a crisis occurs can and will save your life. Now can you see the importance of fire drills and repeated emergency training sessions? Like Mr. Rescorla, security for Morgan Stanley, World Trade Center who was a drill sergeant about preparedness.
8. Do you find this book useful? Why or why not?
9. Gender differences-Men are less likely to evacuate during hurricanes and more likely to put their lives at risk to help somebody. Women are twice as likely to get injured during an evacuation because of their shoes. Do you think these observations and statistics have merit? How does reading about these gender differences and survival outcomes change your outlook (if at all) about certain disasters you might face?
10. Don't we all suffer from the "Lake Wobegon effect" – Harrison Keller fictitious place where "the women are strong, the men are good looking and all the children are above average? How could this overconfidence in oneself help or hurt in a crisis?

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General discussion questions

- For the person who chose the book – What made you want to read it? What made you pick it for the book club? Did it live up to your expectations?
- How is the book structured? First person? Third person? Flashbacks? Narrative devices? Do you think the author did a good job with it?
- How would you describe the author’s writing style? Concise? Flowery? How is language used in this book? Read aloud a passage that really struck you. How does that passage relate to the book as a whole?
- How effective is the author’s use of plot twists? Were you able to predict certain things before they happened? Did the author keep you guessing until the end?
- Did the book hold your interest?
- How important is the setting to the story? Did you feel like you were somewhere else? Did the time setting make a difference in the story? Did the author provide enough background information for you to understand the setting and time placement?
- Which is stronger in the book – the characters or the plots?
- Would you recommend this book to someone else? Why? And to whom?

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Title: Remembering the Beverly Hills Supper Club Tragedy

website address: <https://www.ket.org/living/remembering-beverly-hills-supper-club-tragedy/>



Beverly Hills Supper Club fire, May 28, 1977. 167 people died in the fire



Wikipedia page

Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)

<https://www.ready.gov/community-emergency-response-team>