

# Southfield Public Library

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## *The Husband's Secret* by Liane Moriarty

*Discussion questions used at SPL January 9<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018*

### **Discussion Questions taken from LitLovers:**

1. When Cecilia finds the letter addressed to her from her husband, "To be opened only in the event of my death," she is tormented by the ethics of opening it. Do you agree with her ultimate decision? What would you have done?
2. Consider the title *The Husband's Secret*. Several characters in the book have secrets they hold on to that they eventually reveal. Felicity and Will share the secret of their affair to Tess; John-Paul guards his secret from Cecilia until he is forced to admit it. What are the ramifications of their secrets? Is secrecy ever warranted and justifiable?
3. Tess has suffered her whole life from crippling social anxiety. How has this made everyday situations a challenge for her? Why has she never confronted her problem? Why doesn't she tell anyone about it?
4. The Berlin Wall is referred to throughout the novel as Esther works on her school project. And in fact, we learn that Cecilia met John-Paul on the day the Wall finally came down. What does the Wall signify in the book?
5. Grief is a major theme in the novel, and many of the characters have suffered as a result of their losses. How has grief affected Rachel? Rob? Tess? John-Paul? How do they each cope? In what ways have their lives have been irrevocably altered as a result of their grieving? Do you think people can fully stop grieving and move on with their lives?
6. The concept of guilt also plays a major role in the novel. Rachel feels that

because of a brief flirtation with Toby Murphy she was absent when Janie died. John-Paul continues to sacrifice things that he loves, out of guilt for what he did to Janie. It seems that these characters have never been able to recover from the feelings of guilt caused by their actions. Yet at the same time, other characters in the book do not appear to feel guilt in the same way. Consider Felicity and Will. Do they have remorse for their affair? And does Tess regret her fling with Connor? What determines how guilty one feels-is it the situation, or is it determined by the individual's character?

7. Tess and Felicity have a history of making snide comments about other people. Tess realizes this only once she is out of the comfort zone she's shared with Felicity for so many years. How has such negative energy affected her relationships with others? Do you think she and Felicity are actually cruel, or is there another reason for their unkind behavior?

8. Ethics and morals are important themes in the book. Discuss how John-Paul, Cecilia, Tess, Will, and Rachel have each done something they would not have thought possible. Have you ever acted in a way that seems entirely out of character? How did you feel? Does love cause people to do things they wouldn't normally do?

9. Consider the notion of betrayal in this book. Which characters have betrayed someone they love? Are their acts of betrayal premeditated, or are they unplanned decisions that become regrettable actions? When one person betrays another, can that person be forgiven? Or is the damage irreparable?

10. The novel is narrated in third-person and in past tense. Given the intense focus on three women, why did the author choose to tell the story from this point of view? How does this perspective add a sense of mystery and foreboding?

11. Cecilia has been married to John-Paul for fifteen years and has three children with him. Until she opens his letter, she seems to trust him and

believe him to be the wonderful husband and father she's always thought him to be. But when she discovers his terrible, sinful secret, she begins to question him. How well can one know one's spouse? Is it possible to ever completely know another person?

*(Questions issued by publisher.)*

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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:*

*Discussion questions taken from a website:*

*website address:*