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Rainbow Comes and Goes by Anderson Cooper and Gloria Vanderbilt

Discussion questions used at SPL April 10 & 11, 2018

Discussion Questions taken from the Reading Group Guide(www.readinggroupguides.com):

1. Why do you think it took Anderson and Gloria so long to have this kind of discussion? Does old age provide a kind of urgency for these conversations? Have you had a similar dialogue with a parent or grandparent?
2. Gloria writes, "My first reaction upon reaching ninety-one is surprise." Have you had the same feeling upon reaching a milestone birthday? Do you think we feel frozen at a certain age? What age would that be for you?
3. Anderson writes that he assumed he wouldn't live past 50, which is the age at which his father died. Is it hard for you to imagine living past the age at which a parent has died?
4. Great wealth can open many doors, but it can also be a burden. How does Gloria's case illustrate this? Would you want to be wealthy beyond all imagining? Like Gloria, do you think you would reject the idea of sitting on a beach somewhere, or not?
5. The novelist Mary Gordon wrote, "A fatherless girl thinks all things possible and nothing safe," a line that has resonated with Gloria throughout her life. Do you think this is true? How does it apply to Gloria's decisions about romance, career and family?
6. Anderson and Gloria learn in the book that they had each fantasized about being left a letter by their deceased fathers. Have you ever imagined the same kind of letter from someone you loved and lost?
7. In what ways does Anderson take after his mother? What do you see as their most striking differences?
8. Do you believe that everything happens for a reason, as Gloria does, or do you reject the concept, like Anderson does? Why?
9. Do you tend to plan for the future, as Anderson does, or assume that things will work out, in his mother's style?

10. Toward the end of the book, Gloria writes a letter to her 17-year-old self. If you were to write a letter to yourself at 17, what would you say?

11. What do you think of the phrase, “The Rainbow Comes and Goes”? How does it apply to the authors’ lives? Does it apply to your own life, too, and if so, how?

Additional questions:

1. As a mother(parent), what would you want your child(ren) to know about you? What would you want to know about your parent(s)?
2. What do you think is the biggest take away from reading this book?
3. Did reading this book shatter anything that you believed about Gloria Vanderbilt and her life?
4. How would you approach discussing difficult subjects with your parent(s)? Would communicating via email be an option, Why or why not?
5. The title “The Rainbow Comes and Goes” comes from a Wordsworth poem that Vanderbilt is fond of quoting, as it expresses her optimistic philosophy on life and how to live it: “Nothing is meant to last forever. Our lives are fleeting. We surround ourselves with objects, collect things, try to hold on to people and money and status, but it doesn’t last. We are not meant always to be happy, and who would want to be? Happiness becomes meaningless if it were a constant state.... No one escapes. The rainbow comes and goes. Enjoy it while it lasts. Don’t be surprised by its departure, and rejoice when it returns.” Do you agree? Is this a good philosophy to live by? Source: Review by [Bronwyn Miller](#) on April 28, 2016; posted on [www.20somethingsread.com](#)
6. Are there any passages/phrases/quotes from the book that you related to or resonated with you?
7. What impact do you think the death for Gloria’s father had on her? In what ways do you think it contributed to her 1st & 2nd marriages and previous relationships? 1st marriage- Marrying @17 years old husband is 32 years old; 2nd marriage-63 year old composer to Gloria’s 21 years old; 3rd husband-movie produce director Sidney Lumet, 32 yrs old Gloria,32 yrs old; & Wyatt Anderson, 36 yrs old, Gloria, 39 yrs old.

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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:

Anderson Cooper Gloria Vanderbilt Carter Cooper



Nothing Left UnSaid – a companion documentary by HBO to *The Rainbow Comes and Goes*.

The world of Gloria Vanderbilt by Wendy Goodman ; with a foreword by Anderson Cooper -- BIO VANDERBILT

It seemed important at the time: a romance memoir by Gloria Vanderbilt -- BIO VANDERBILT

Wadsworth Poem inspired the book title:

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45536/ode-intimations-of-immortality-from-recollections-of-early-childhood>

NPR interview with Diane Rehm, 3/2016:

<https://dianerehm.org/audio/#/shows/2016-03-31/anderson-cooper-and-gloria-vanderbilt-the-rainbow-comes-and-goes/112230/@00:00>

Gloria Vanderbilt's parents:



Reginald Claypoole Vanderbilt was 43 yrs old when he married 19 year old Gloria Morgan.