

HIT THE BOOK CLUB



Thanks for choosing *Raven Lane* for your book club pick, we know you're going to absolutely love it. Please note that some of the questions below may reveal important aspects of the plot, including the ending. We suggest you wait to review this guide until after you've finished the book. Enjoy!

xoxo BookSparks

#HITTHEBOOKCLUB

HIT THE BOOK CLUB WITH *RAVEN LANE* BY AMBER COWIE



1. What benefits do Esme and Benedict each get from their marriage? Do you think they were ever truly in love, or was it always a relationship of convenience/need? What about Torn and Aaron's marriage? Are the other relationships (Sophie and Ray, Miriam and Levi) based on something different?
2. Why was Esme tempted by Torn? Why was Torn so drawn to her? What did he offer her that was worth risking her marriage? Would she have slept with him without the "push" from Kitty's key party?
3. Esme was the keeper of secrets in her marriage (Jed's rape and the ensuing fallout, the question of Zoe's paternity, her affair with Torn). Is she a sympathetic character despite her withholdings, or could she be considered a master manipulator? Alternatively, do you think Benedict acted nobly in pretending that he didn't suspect Jed's transgressions against Esme, or in raising Zoe without questioning her parentage?
4. How does the culture and exclusivity of *Raven Lane* both limit and inform the perspectives of its residents? Are the characters' actions a product of their inherent natures or of their unique, hot pot of an environment? Where is the line between intimacy and intrusion in a close-knit community?
5. Do you feel sympathy for any of the characters? Are there any who are redeemable/good, in your eyes? Why or why not? Were the residents of *Raven Lane* drawn into something beyond their control, or did they create the poisonous dynamics of their neighborhood?
6. Many of the characters are artists who create beautiful work (e.g., Sophie and her miniatures, Torn and his novels, Esme and her cooking). How do the ugly aspects of their personalities and actions feed their art? Would their work be as profound without the shadowy side behind it? Or in some cases, did the characters' failures (Ray's manuscript rejections, Benedict's stalled modeling career, Esme's decision to leave acting) make them monstrous in turn?

7. Why would Ray surround himself with successful artists while he struggled to achieve his own dreams? Does the proximity of their achievements inspire or damage him? Do other people on *Raven Lane* feel similar animosity and admiration for the things their neighbors have achieved?
8. Do you think the incident with Benedict and Torn was truly an accident? How did the author set up the various pieces to create that tragedy? Are any characters implicated, in your opinion? What might have happened to them had Benedict not been killed? Do you believe Esme was preparing to testify for or against Benedict on the morning of his murder?
9. What do you think motivated Anthony to kill Benedict? Were you surprised? Do you think any part of Esme was grateful to Anthony for what he did? Do you think she is culpable in any way?
10. Did Torn and Benedict both deserve what they got in the end? Do you think either of them accepted responsibility for their shortcomings, or ever truly acknowledged them, before their premature deaths? Was it necessary for them to die?
11. Has Esme successfully earned the love she so desperately craved in response to her mother's cold and distant treatment, whether in her relationships or her pursuits. Do you think she was a good mother to Zoe? Oppositely, did she fail Julia as a maternal figure? As father's, how do Benedict and Torn compare? Do you think they are both selfish in their desires to be parents, or do they have the capacity to love?
12. How does Torn's novel *The Call* reflect the themes, events, and characters in *Raven Lane*.
13. How does reading about monstrous people make you feel? Does the damage that has been done to people in the past excuse their actions in the present? Is it comforting to read about characters' bad choices, knowing you would never make the same mistakes? Does it help alleviate guilt over mistakes of your past to see you're not alone? Or something else?
14. "I know what I am now, and you cannot bear it. But you must." How does that quote resonate with the real world? Who must bear the monstrosities of today, and how do they survive?
15. How did the interpretation of Esme by others in her life differ from the way she saw herself? Did her past trauma cloud her own self-perception? Or make her shield herself so well that no one was able to truly know her?
16. Esme seeks solace in her restaurant and the secret space of her kitchen after her assault, shying away from the public eye. How does Jed's abuse of power affect her, even when she believes herself to be safe? Did she bring the echoes of violence into her newly created life without realizing it? Why does it bother her that Torn cannot let go of Esme Lee.

17. Is Esme in control of her own destiny, or have the men in her life dictated her fate? Considering that these men asserted their power and/or robbed her of her own autonomy in one way or another, does she ever get ahead of that trend? Based on your interpretation, is the ending a hopeful one? Do you perceive Esme's vow to write her story as the potential for her to redirect the future? How will telling Zoe the truth as she sees it influence the next generation?