

BOTH ARE TRUE

BOOK DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. When the novel opens, Jackie is both anxious and over-confident about her new role as a Family Court judge. How do we see these conflicting emotions play out in her interaction with Lou, and her encounters with Ms. Clark on the subway and in the courtroom? How would you describe Jackie's character at the beginning of the story?
2. Jackie's New York is very different from Lou's. Although she appreciates the vibrancy of the city, she's often overwhelmed by the sheer mass of humanity on the streets, in the subway, and in her courtroom. Lou is the exact opposite, reveling in every experience. What do their differing reactions say about their personalities, and are they predictive of what goes wrong in their relationship?
3. Was the description of Family Court, including the range of cases, the interactions among court personnel, and the intensity of emotions what you would have expected? Does it differ from other types of court experiences with which you're familiar?
4. Is Lou genuinely a sensitive guy at heart, or is his writing persona and his column just an act? Did his stay at home role during his marriage, where he was the caretaking parent to Bryn, help form him? Or is he a freeloader, living off two strong women, Tara and Jackie? How does his character develop over the course of the story?
5. Jackie's sister Mindy is her best friend. How are the two women similar and how are they different? Is Jackie able to hear Mindy's advice about the need to change? Is it really possible to change one's basic personality for the sake of love, and is that too much to ask?
6. Jackie struggles to balance her desire to control the families that come before her with her growing sense of compassion for them. Is she successful? How would you rate her interaction with Ms. Clark when she shows up at Jackie's home? Or Moshe and his family in the arson sentencing and later at the juvenile facility? What goes wrong in the Chang domestic violence case and what does Jackie learn from that experience?
7. Why did Tara let Lou back into her home when he arrived on her doorstep? And why did she allow a brief stint crashing on the couch turn into an extended stay? What would you have done in this situation? How would you explain Bryn's trajectory after Lou left? Is her behavior directly attributable to the divorce or are there other factors at play?
8. What is Jackie's view on motherhood? Does she want what Mindy has, or is she striving for something else? What makes her so angry when she sees the teen with the fake

baby on the subway? And how did you feel about her desire to have a child at the end of the novel?

9. What was Lou's experience with his friends after he and Tara divorced? Is it typical for couples to divide up their friends? Why was Lou left with no one? Did his attempt to reconnect with Harrison make things better or worse? Did Lou's column compensate for his lack of human connection? Do men and women, in your experience, have a different need for intimate friendship?
10. When Bryn ends up in her courtroom, Jackie knows that the only ethically and legally permissible course is to recuse herself from the case. Can her decision to stay on the case be justified as a way to help Bryn outside the strict legal framework? Or does she let her longing for Lou hold sway over everything else? Does Jackie get off too easy in the end?
11. Jackie's handling of Bryn's case, especially her stretching of the law, was clearly improper. Some judges are corrupt and take bribes to influence their decisions; do you think there are instances where judges act out of compassion or other not strictly legal concerns short of outright illegality? Does it matter to you when considering Jackie's actions that Paloma, the other girl at the bowling alley, was not hurt in the incident?
12. Was Jackie's attempt to seduce Lou an act of desperation? of love? Was her offer to help Bryn a quid pro quo or a genuine expression of her desire to help the child? Were you surprised at Lou's reaction?
13. Both Jackie and Lou find love by the end of the novel. Did you think they would end up together? Were you satisfied as a reader by the paths their lives took? What did they learn from their own romance that allowed Jackie to let Mike into her life, and Lou to rekindle his relationship with Tara? How important were the children, Amanda and Bryn, in the equation?