

THE POSSIBILITIES

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think Hannah is so torn about whether to leave Jack in front of the elevators or take him upstairs with her to get the car key? Do you think this has anything to do with why he disappears just then?
2. The Possibilities starts briefly as a third-person narrative and then switches to a first-person narrative. Why do you think the author does this? How did it affect your reading of the book?
3. Early in the book, Hannah describes what she calls the “car swerve feeling.” What is this feeling and how do you think it motivates Hannah’s behavior in the early parts of the book? Have you ever had the feeling that even though something terrible *didn’t* happen, it came so close that you aren’t totally relieved?
4. Hannah isn’t sure for much of the book whether she’s “crazy or the world is.” Did you also wonder this while reading? Did you ever feel the question was definitively resolved? If so, at what point? Have you ever been in circumstances that made you feel unsure whether it was you or the situation that was more out of whack?
5. Hannah and Adam’s relationship changes dramatically after they have a child. Why do you think this is? What do you think is different for Hannah⁴² and Adam⁴²? By the end of the book did you think Hannah and Adam would stay together? Did you want them to?
6. Hannah and Adam react to the trauma of Jack’s birth very differently. Did you identify with one reaction more than the other?
7. The parents in this book struggle with how to reconcile who they were before children with who they are after, and for each of them this struggle is different based on their own life history. How would you characterize this struggle for Hannah? What aspects of her own past do you think she needed to confront as she figured out how to be Jack’s mother? What about for Adam?
8. Why does Grace pretend not to know Hannah? Why does she decide to stop pretending? Do you agree with her choices?
9. According to Grace, there’s something about birth that changes how the possibilities interact. Why is this? Did this seem plausible to you on an emotional level?
10. Did the science woven into the book bring you further away from or deeper into the emotions of the story?
11. Why do you think Hannah is so drawn to Ash?

THE POSSIBILITIES

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

12. Why do you think the women in the mothers' group still remember Jack even after Adam forgets him?
13. Does Adam ever fully forget the version of Jack who lived? What do you think is going on for him when he is sending Hannah pained and confused texts as she drives to meet her mother? What do you imagine it was like for him when Jack was suddenly back in his crib? Did he immediately remember that version of his son's life? Does he remember believing his son died during birth? Will he and Hannah ever talk about this?
14. What is the choice Hannah makes at the end of the book? How is it different from the choice her mother makes, and what enables her to make it? What would have happened if she hadn't made this choice? Would you have made the same choice or a different one?
15. The science fiction elements of the book can be read both literally and as a metaphor for the psychological experience of becoming a mother. Describe the symbolic meanings of the following elements of the book: Jack's disappearance; walking astride the possibilities; Hannah42 and Adam42; the role of Hannah's mother; the way Hannah retrieves Jack from the no-place; the choice Hannah must make at the end of the book.
16. The author has described this novel as a book about how to learn to live with the anxiety of loving someone in the way a mother loves a child. Do you agree with this description? How do you think Hannah learned to live with this anxiety? Is this a question you deal with in your own life?