

April & Oliver Book Club Discussion Topics

I would be happy to connect with your book club either in person (Cape Cod or Morris/Essex County, NJ) or via Zoom.

Please see my contact page if you're interested. I hope these prompts will inspire lively conversation. Thanks so much for reading!

1. The prologue of April and Oliver depicts the fatal car crash of April's brother, told from his point of view. What does Buddy's perspective add to the story?
2. At the end of Chapter 2, why does Oliver fail to return the lost button from April's dress?
3. The novel contains many flashbacks. How does the history between April and Oliver affect their current relationship?
4. What is your opinion of T.J.? Why do you suppose April goes back to him after getting the protection order?
5. What shift takes place during April and Oliver's Christmas Eve conversation in front of the fireplace? How does their exchange that night affect the dynamics between them the following day?
6. Why does Oliver react so strongly to the revelation that he used to play piano?
7. The narration shifts between the points of view of April, Oliver, and occasionally other characters. Why does the author use this device, and how does it feel to be privy to each character's thoughts?
8. What do you make of April's relationship to her father, and how do you think it affects her present life?
9. Do you think April should mail the fabricated love letter to Buddy's old girlfriend? Why do you suppose she wants to do so?
10. After Christmas, April has the opportunity to meet Al in New York rather than go to see T.J. Why doesn't she?
11. Why does April bring Kenny, of all people, to Oliver's barbeque?

There is quite a bit of external drama that takes place that day, but there is also an inward shift for April. How would you describe this change?

12. What does April mean on page 143 when she says, "If I were a killer, you're the one I'd kill"? How does this alter the energy between them?

13. Were you surprised when Al confronted T.J. in Hal's backyard? Do you think he did the right thing? Did you believe in T.J.'s desire to make a fresh start?

14. After the stabbing, why does April go to her grandmother's house instead of the hospital? How does the incident become a breaking point for Oliver?

15. Do you sympathize with Bernadette? What would you do if you suspected your partner had feelings for someone else?

16. Were you surprised when T.J. waded into the river? Do you think he made a conscious choice?

17. What kind of father is Hal? How has he influenced Oliver?

18. Why does Oliver behave so uncharacteristically at the beach house? If April hadn't gotten hurt, would he have gone through with his attack? How does the energy between them change mid-scene?

19. How does Dubious affect their relationship? Do you think the dog is a good idea or not?

20. Why does Oliver take April up the mountain in the middle of the night rather than to the diner? What happens between them there, and why does it take that particular environment to let it happen?

21. Do you believe that Oliver loves Bernadette? Can someone be in love with two people at the same time?

22. What do you think of Nana's character? How does she influence April's life?

23. Near the end of the story, why do April and Oliver agree not to speak for six months? Is this a good idea?

24. What does Oliver find in his travels that he didn't possess before? What does April find on Nahant? How have they changed?

25. Why doesn't Oliver write anything on the postcard? What do you suppose will happen next?

April & Oliver Discussion Topics Inspired by *The Power of Now* by Eckhart Tolle

1. At what moments in the story do you see April's "pain-body" emerge? How does it manifest itself? Does she seem to have any awareness of it? What consequences does it create?
2. How do the "pain-bodies" of various characters trigger and interact with one another? Is there ever a moment when a character witnesses someone else's pain-body without getting drawn into it? What enables this?
3. What escapes do the characters use to avoid pain? Consider their various habits, addictions and diversions.
4. How do you see the "insane cycle of involuntary reflex" at work in the characters' lives? Which character seems to have the most "consciousness?" Who seems to be the most deeply "unconscious?"
5. How do Oliver's thoughts about his future affect his experience of the present?
6. What fleeting moments of consciousness appear for each of the characters? Do they embrace these moments or dismiss them?
7. Why does April start a relationship with T.J. despite her recognition that she is stuck in a pattern that is detrimental to her?
8. In the scene at the beach when Oliver nearly assaults April, both of their pain-bodies are raging. What snaps them out of the script and restores them to a genuine experience of each other's essence?
9. Eckart Tolle says that when a relationship causes you strife, be glad, because what was unconscious is being brought up to the light. Such moments present an opportunity for salvation if one is present to one's feelings. How does the opportunity for "salvation" manifest itself in the relationship between April and Oliver?
10. Each in his own way, Oliver and April create space around themselves at the end of the novel. How is this important to their spiritual journeys? If they see each other again in the future, how do you suppose things would be different between and within them?