

Readers Guide for ALL THE DIFFERENCE, by Leah Ferguson

Note: These questions contain spoilers!

Introduction

New Year's Eve. A time for resolutions. A chance to make a change. And for thirty-year-old Molly Sullivan, a night that will transform her life forever...

All it takes is one word—yes or no—to decide Molly's future. As the clock counts down to midnight and the ball slowly begins to drop, Molly's picture-perfect boyfriend gets down on one knee and asks her to marry him. She knows she should say yes, especially considering the baby-sized surprise she just discovered she's carrying. But something in her heart is telling her to say no...

Now, Molly's future can follow two very different paths: one where she stays with her baby's father, despite her misgivings and his family's unreasonable expectations, and one where she ventures out on her own as a single mother, embracing all the hardships that come with it.

And by the time the next New Year is rung in, Molly will know which choice was right—following her head or listening to her heart...

Discussion Questions

1. ALL THE DIFFERENCE is a novel that follows one woman along two very different paths, which diverge when she must make an important decision. At the beginning of the novel, did you believe that Molly was going to say yes or no? Do you think she made the right choice?
2. Hindsight is something that we are privy to only after our choices have been made. How often do you side with yourself even in hindsight? How has hindsight led you to make stronger choices in the future?
3. Throughout the novel, Molly and Scott's relationship shifts from emotional and carefree to focused on the baby and barely functional. Would it have made sense for them to stay together for the baby's sake?
4. Molly refers to the songs and lyrics of Fleetwood Mac throughout the novel. Are you familiar with their music? How did it shape your imagination while reading?
5. Scott's immaturity in both paths of Molly's life is prevalent. Did you feel that Molly had unrealistic expectations of him or that he would've have been capable of change?
6. Under stress, Molly compulsively cleans to control her environment and calm her emotions. What tricks do you use to soothe yourself during stressful times? Are yours as helpful as Molly's?
7. Jenny's difficulty in getting pregnant made Molly feel guilty about her unplanned pregnancy. Have you ever been handed something another person was working hard to achieve? How did you deal with their feelings? Has the opposite ever occurred?
8. When Liam decides to give his relationship with his ex-girlfriend another chance, Molly lets him go. Were you proud of her for this? Do you believe in second chances when it comes to relationships?

9. Oftentimes people see safety and comfort in the familiar. Describe some of the ways the characters in the novel fall into their comfort zones.
10. Toward the end of the novel, Scott pleads: "You're in my head when I go to bed at night, and you're the first thing I think about when I wake up. It's like, I didn't need you when I had you, but now I can't live without you. I'm obsessed." Did you believe him or do you think he was upset for not getting what he wanted? What does this statement suggest a relationship with Scott would be like for Molly?
11. In Chapter 12, Molly observes: "Emily and Jack's home, in this rambling neighborhood in West Chester, with the old stone houses and whitewashed fences and spacious, landscaped backyards, wasn't real, even in comparison to Monica and Edward's. This wasn't authentic life, at least to Molly. Not right now, anyway. It was too perfect, and separate, and took a lot of work to maintain. Molly's life was grittier, her path still filled with gravel and potholes. She wasn't ready for an easy road yet, especially one already laid out for her. She was still content to keep walking and get to where she was supposed to go, eventually." How is the comparison between her parents' home and Molly's life symbolic? How can seeking solace in chaos work to Molly's benefit?
12. In Chapter 12, Molly recalls her skydiving experience: "But when she's finally landed on the ground on weak legs and saw Scott rushing toward her, exhilarated, to wrap his muscular arms around her and lift her off the ground once again, she'd been grateful. To him, for pushing her—because he did have to shove her out of the plane—and to herself, for letting herself trust that it would be okay." How has Molly grown throughout the novel? Do you think Molly at the beginning of the book would have the same outlook?
13. When considering the two possible paths of Molly's life, did you think she could end up without Scott in either? Are our destinies predetermined? How much control do we have over them?

About the Author

Leah Ferguson holds a B.A. in English Literature and Russian Language from West Chester University and an M.A. in teaching from Notre Dame of Maryland University. She began her career in publishing, working as a managing editor for both a national law book publisher and for the publisher of two trade magazines, as well as freelance editing publications for the Pennsylvania Bar Association. She changed careers to become an English educator, teaching for Maryland and Pennsylvania public schools as well as for Immaculate University while also contributing personal essays to the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Harrisburg Patriot-News*. Leah now writes from home and is a full-time mother to three young children. She keeps a blog called One Vignette and founded a Tumblr called What the Duchess Isn't Doing along with her work in women's fiction. She lives in Pennsylvania with her husband, children, rescue dog and a tailless cat. *ALL THE DIFFERENCE* is her first novel, and she is currently working on her second.