

READING GROUP GUIDE FOR *COMING BACK TO ME*

1. Gary and Molly are drawn together because they both feel orphaned. When they move into New Jersey, they find a tightly-knit community that perceives them as outsiders, which makes Gary and Molly so uncomfortable that they draw even closer together. What is Leavitt saying about the notion of community? How and why does this notion change throughout the book?
2. On page 301, Gary thinks: "Events didn't turn out the way you always hoped they would. But the thing was that sometimes people came through. The most unexpected people in the most unexpected ways." Who were the unexpected people for Gary, and how did they help?
3. A cornerstone of the book is two memories of the same event: Molly's version and Suzanne's version of the time when Suzanne ran away from home with her boyfriend Ivan and how it affected the family, especially the relationship between the sisters. Why do you think the author gave us two versions of the same incident?
4. The theme of memory crops up again when Molly is in the hospital and has been given memory blockers and can't remember seeing her family at all. What is Leavitt saying about how and why we remember what we do? Are there ever things people need to forget?
5. Some reviewers noted a surprisingly dark world view while others focused in on the healing element of hope. Molly, after all, survives her ordeal, but when she asks a doctor if she's cured, the answer is "we don't know." The last sentence of the book says that Molly lives, but it's prefaced with "Right now." What do you think this says about destiny and fate and our ability to plan for the future, and why is this hopeful?
6. Why do you think the characters in this book are so accessible to the reader? How do you think the author made sure you would care about the characters, even the ones like Suzanne who are behaving badly?
7. *Coming Back to Me* is told from the perspectives of three different people. How would the book be different if it was told by just Gary? Or by just Suzanne?
8. Molly and Suzanne both had a missing-in-action mother, a woman who was there, but who was more intent on finding a husband than attending to her daughter's needs. Why do you think the author made Molly a missing-in-action mother, too? What is the significance of the way Molly finally bonds with baby Otis?

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