

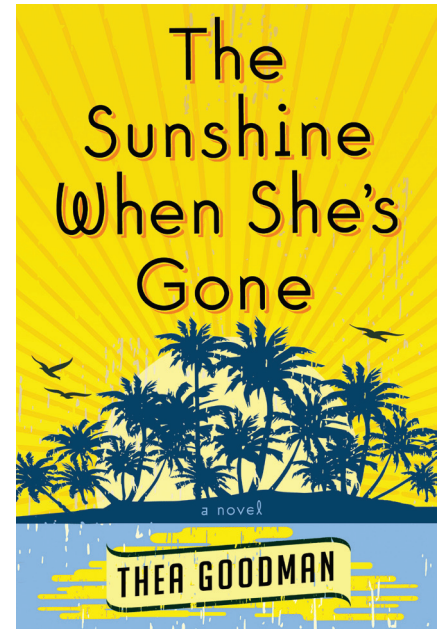


# Reading Group Gold

## The Sunshine When She's Gone Thea Goodman

### Discussion Questions

1. The story alternates between John and Veronica's perspectives and phases in and out from flashbacks to the present. How does this narration affect your understanding of the relationship between the couple and of the characters individually? Does it help you to empathize with either John or Veronica, or both?
2. John and Veronica view their marriage in the context of 'before and after.' Explain this concept and how their lives are changed with Clara's arrival. Is the baby solely responsible for the switch in their dynamic, or is it the parents themselves who bring about this change?
3. What roles do Ines and Art play in the couple's lives? Compare them to John and Veronica. Do you think there will be a 'before and after' for them once they have their baby?
4. Veronica is obsessed with raising Clara her way. She has everything planned out, from the goat milk and Bjorn carriers to instituting the latest parenting methods. Despite her good intentions, is she really doing what is best for the baby? Do you always need to stick to a plan in order to have a perfect life, or is it sometimes better when it goes astray?
5. After Veronica finds out that John took Clara to Barbados, she is infuriated and asserts that Clara is her baby. Whose child is she? Is the mother entitled to have more say in what happens to the baby?
6. John's impromptu trip with Clara was meant to be a considerate gesture, yet it spirals out of control with his unintentional lies. What constitutes a lie? What are other instances in the book where lies (even of omission) are used to protect the other person? Are you ever justified in lying to your partner?
7. The story shifts between a wintry New York City and the sun-filled getaway of Barbados. Why do you think the story is set in these two locations, and how do the distinct identities of these places contribute to the plot and the development of the characters in the story?
8. John says he is almost jealous of the relationship between Veronica and Ines. Describe the relationship between the two friends. Why is John jealous of them? Is there something in their relationship that is missing from his marriage?



ISBN: 978-0-8050-9662-0



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9. John and Veronica both lose a sense of themselves and of one another throughout their relationship. Do you think that people sometimes have to hit rock bottom in order to realize their mistakes and find themselves again?
10. John and Veronica envy other couples for their seemingly perfect relationships (Muriel and Evan; Lena and her husband). What do they recognize in others' relationships that they don't see in theirs? Is a relationship ever naturally "perfect," or is it a result of effort and commitment?
11. Art attends happiness studies seminars as a part of his research, but it seems that John and Veronica are the ones in actual need of happiness. What does happiness mean in the frame of the book? How does one become happy? Do John and Veronica find true happiness in the end?