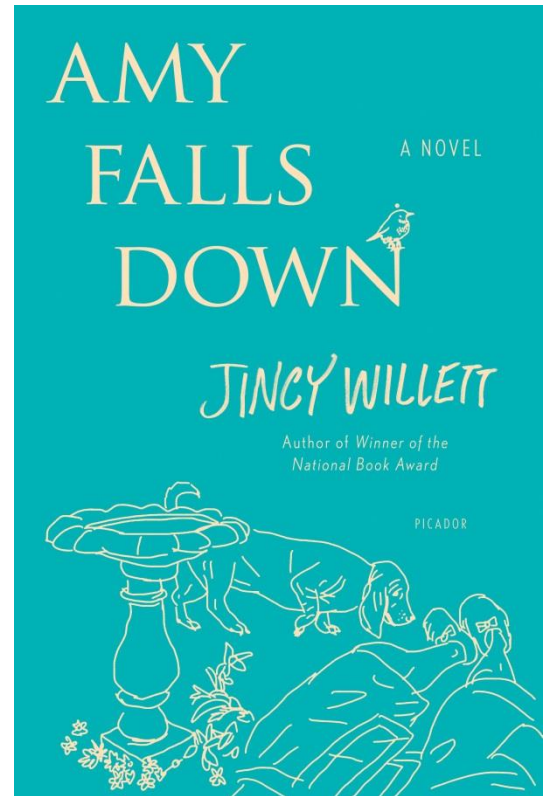


# Reading Group Gold

## Amy Falls Down

by Jincy Willett

1. Many details of Amy's personality or past life are somewhat alluded to by the narrator at an earlier point, and then later explained. What delayed revelation most surprised you? Did your perception of Amy change over the course of the novel?
2. What do you make of the contradiction of Amy being so afraid of death -- yet so lackadaisical about maintaining her health and wellbeing?
3. Why do you think Amy and Max stayed married, long after the threat of Max getting drafted had lifted?
4. Why is Amy so reluctant to get involved with Carla's writer's retreat?
5. How does Amy's self-described lack of ambition become an asset to her public persona?
6. How do characters that Amy initially perceives as irritating -- such as Maxine, Carla, and Jenny Marzen -- develop into fully realized, and often likable, people?
7. Why is Amy so interested in her dream life? How does this interest fit with her view that "you had no more control over your stories than a sailor does over the weather. And if you do control your story, the weather isn't real"?
8. What do you make of Amy's declaration that "feelings aren't news." Why does she recoil when she finds herself or others writing about natural human responses to tragic or significant events (such as death or childbirth)?
9. How does Patrice "save" Amy with his story on the airplane? Have you ever experienced a healing or salvation from a story?
10. After the panel conference in New York, Amy ruminates on aging, and seeing oneself "from the outside". What are your thoughts as you ponder Amy as a young woman, beautiful and vain?
11. How does the train crash make Amy's life more ironic than she thinks fiction ought to be? Do you think coincidences in stories are irritating, or an inextricable part of life?



12. Do you tend to believe that everything happens for a reason, as many of the commenters on Amy's website assert, or that we create our own narrative out of the random events in our life, as Amy believes? What do you think about the phrase "Accident-Driven Life" that guides Amy?
13. What do you make of Amy's poet-friend's assertion that childless people remain children until death? Do you think that theory applies to Amy? How does her realization near the end of the novel that she should have had children change or deepen your thoughts on this?
14. What, if anything, did you find illuminating about writing and/or publishing culture? Do you think the world needs more or less authors? How about readers?

### **About the Author**

Jincy Willett is the author of *Jenny and the Jaws of Life*, Winner of the National Book Award, and *The Writing Class*, which have been translated and sold internationally. Her stories have been published in *Cosmopolitan*, *McSweeney's Quarterly*, and other magazines. She frequently reviews for *The New York Times Book Review*. Willett spends her days parsing the sentences of total strangers and her nights teaching and writing—sometimes, late at night, in the dark, she laughs inappropriately.



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Reading group guide written by Heather Kirkpatrick