

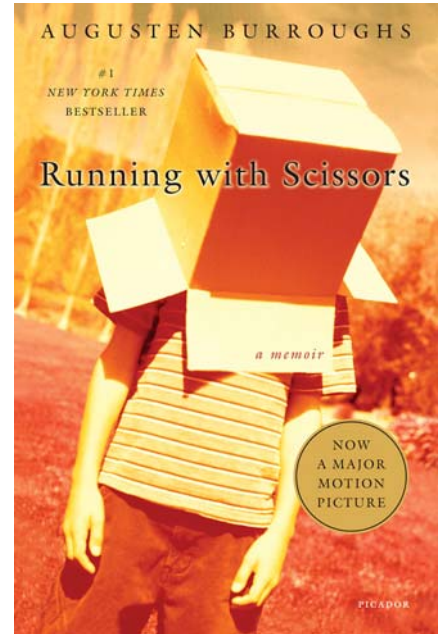
READING GROUP GUIDE

Running with Scissors A Memoir

by *Augusten Burroughs*

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About this Guide

The following author biography and list of questions about *Running with Scissors* are intended as resources to aid individual readers and book groups who would like to learn more about the author and this book. We hope that this guide will provide you a starting place for discussion, and suggest a variety of perspectives from which you might approach *Running with Scissors*.

About the Book

Hilarious, original, and now a major motion picture with actual movie stars, *Running with Scissors* is the strange yet affecting tale of a boy raised in chaos who learns that the only way to survive insanity is to adapt and, perhaps, become a little insane along the way. Described by *The New York Times Book Review* as promoting “laughter, wincing, retching on nearly every page” and “funny and rich with child’s-eye details of adults who have gone off the rails,” *Running with Scissors* is surely a memoir for the ages.

“*Running with Scissors* is hilarious, freaky-deaky, berserk, controlled, transcendent, touching, affectionate, vengeful, all-embracing. . . . It makes a good run at blowing every other [memoir] out of the water.”

—Carolyn See, *The Washington Post*

“It is as funny as it is twisted.” —*GQ*

“A hilarious and horrifying memoir.” —*Los Angeles Times*

“The anecdotes can be so flippant, and so insanely funny (quite literally), that the effect is that of a William Burroughs situation comedy.” —*The New York Times*

“Burroughs defies the ‘woe is me’ stigma of modern memoir with a raucous recounting of his loony teenage years.” —*Entertainment Weekly* (grade: A)

“A memoir that is both horrifying and mordantly funny.” —*San Francisco Chronicle*

“Wickedly, ridiculously funny.” —*Boston Herald*

“Reads like David Sedaris writing *The Hotel New Hampshire*.” —*The Boston Globe*

About the Author

Augusten Burroughs is the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of *Sellelevision*, *Dry*, *Magical Thinking*, and *Possible Side Effects*. A film version of *Running with Scissors* was adapted for the screen by Ryan Murphy. Augusten has been named one of the fifteen funniest people in America by *Entertainment Weekly*. He lives in New York City and western Massachusetts.

Discussion Questions

1. What sort of person does Augusten’s mother Deidre initially appear to be? Does your impression of her change throughout *Running with Scissors*? Does Augusten’s? How?
2. Why does Deidre leave Augusten with Dr. Finch? Did she do the right thing? With whom would Augusten have been better off? Why? What would you have done if you were left with the Finch family?
3. Augusten initially likes Dr. Finch. Do his feelings toward him change? Why? Is Dr. Finch eccentric or crazy? What’s the difference?
4. Augusten sees much of his life in the context of television shows and commercials. Which television shows and commercials were influential to you while growing up? If you had to pick a television show—drama, comedy, or variety series—that best described your own life, which one would it be?
5. The Finch family lives accustomed to chaos and filth. Do you think it’s possible to get used to anything after a while? Explain. Are their things about your way life that might seem strange to other people or other cultures? Have you ever had to adjust to a situation that initially seemed foreign or disturbing to you? Explain.

6. On page 69, Augusten writes, “It was one thing to *be* gay. But it was something else altogether to *seem* gay.” What do you think he means? Which seems gayer to you: Rock Hudson, Liberace, or metrosexuals? Explain.
7. Augusten writes that “Finch believed that anger was the crux of mental illness” (p. 98). Do you agree with the doctor? Why? Who in *Running with Scissors* seems genuinely mentally ill? Why?
8. Should Hope be charged with animal cruelty because of her treatment of the cat? Should Augusten and the other Finches be charged as accomplices?
9. Why do you think Natalie and Augusten become best friends? What pulls them apart? Do you believe Deidre’s finally accusation? Explain.
10. What do you think happened to Neil Bookman? From what you know about him and the 1970s, make up your own epilogue for Neil.
11. Dr. Finch believes that children should choose their own parents. Do you agree? Who does Augusten eventually choose? Did he make the right decision? Why? Are there any circumstances under which a child should disown his or her family? Explain.
12. Do you see *Running with Scissors* as a comic or horror story? Both? Explain.

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