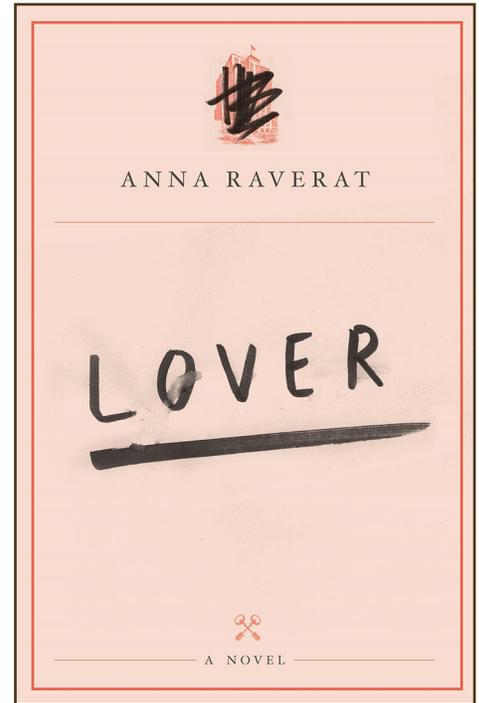


Reading Group Gold

Lover: A Novel

by Anna Raverat



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Kate—a wife, a mother of two, and a senior executive at a multinational hotel company—has made caring for others her life’s work, and she’s good at it. But when she opens her husband’s computer to find a series of email exchanges with an unknown woman, it all begins to fall apart. After ten years of marriage, Kate is forced to take a closer look at her relationship with her husband, and she must ask herself: How well do I really know him?

Things begin to spiral at work, too, with the political machinations in the office taking on an increasingly Shakespearean level of drama and ferocity. Kate gets caught between the ravings of power-hungry bosses and her job, which is to make the hotel guests happy. With both her work and home lives crumbling around her, Kate, for the first time, begins to think about what it is she really wants: from her husband, from her job, from her life.

Lover, the British writer Anna Raverat’s U.S. debut, is an observation of love, work, and life as seen through the lens of a troubled marriage. With the irresistible wit of Emma Straub’s *The Vacationers*, the compelling candor of Ayelet Waldman’s *Love and Other Impossible Pursuits*, and no shortage of brightening humor, Raverat paints an acute portrait of the female psyche, freshly exploring intimacy and the politics of work. Intellectually rich and captivatingly poignant, *Lover* is the powerful story of a woman making her way in the world. We hope that the following discussion topics will enrich your reading group’s experience.

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QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Kate Pedley has made a career in the hospitality industry and has recently begun a high-level job with an international hotel chain. In *Lover*, she describes several hotels, good and bad. How do these hotels—their private rooms and public spaces—mirror human relationships and feelings? How does the epigraph by Rumi foreshadow what happens to Kate?
2. Are there signs that Kate and Adam’s marriage is in trouble before Kate finds the email exchange with Louise? Why is Kate suspicious of Adam?
3. How do Kate’s daughters respond to their parents’ separation? What kind of mother is Kate? Is Adam a good father? How do they help Milla and Hester understand what is happening?
4. What is Kate’s relationship with her mother? Her opinion of her parents’ marriage? Do these change after she and Adam separate?
5. What are the lies that Adam tells Kate? Why is he unfaithful? Why does he walk out on his family in the middle of the night?
6. It takes Kate a long time to realize that her husband left before he was gone. How does she come to understand the full extent of Adam’s betrayal? What does she do to cope? Where does she find support and refuge?
7. Why does Kate need to talk to Louise and Lorna? Do these conversations hurt or help?
8. What kind of people are Trish and Don? What don’t they understand about hotels and the people who work in them that causes Palazzio Hotel Corporation to fail? Who has Kate known and what has she experienced to shape her opinion of their behavior?
9. *Lover* is told completely from Kate’s point of view. If Adam were the narrator, what would be his version of the story?
10. Kate purchases self-help books almost obsessively, but rarely gets around to reading them. What are some of the books? What insights do they provide about Kate’s state of mind? Where does she eventually find solutions to her problems?
11. What does Kate mean when she says, “I hadn’t married my friend; I’d married my lover.” How might Kate and Adam have been better friends?
12. As Kate sorts through her possessions, what does she keep and what does she discard? How do these decisions help her work through her emotions? What does she come to value?
13. How do each of Kate’s interactions with men help her gain the confidence to live on her own?

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14. In his Christmas card to Kate, Adam writes, *I love you. I never stopped loving you and I never will*. How is his concept of love different than Kate's? How does she feel about his Christmas gift?
15. Adam seems to see his betrayals of Kate as casual, understandable, perhaps even forgivable. Kate experiences his actions as dishonest and cruel. She feels that he has turned into a stranger. For her, their separation is a period of deep grieving and hard work to understand what happened. During that time, what does Kate learn about herself, her family, and her marriage? What are her victories? Her failures? Why is Adam surprised when she chooses divorce over reconciliation? Does *Lover* have a happy ending?

PRAISE FOR *LOVER*

“In *Lover*, Anna Raverat tells the beautiful, moving, complicated story of how a good marriage turns bad, creating a mad-fast read that newly explores what it means to be a wife, mother, daughter, friend, and coworker navigating the inanities of corporate life. You’ll never drink from a glass in a hotel room again.” —Helen Klein Ross, author of *What Was Mine*

“Anna Raverat is a humane and generous writer, giving voice to our best instincts and communicating, by quiet and often funny moments, a sense of our ability to overcome adversity with love.” —Chris Cleave, bestselling author of *Little Bee* and *Everyone Brave Is Forgiven*

“I wept through *Lover* by Anna Raverat. It’s written with such a light touch, but is so piercing and so true.” —Liza Klausmann, author of *Tigers in Red Weather*

“Wise and subtle and witty . . . Filled with humanity and warmth. A compulsively readable book about a breakup from a brilliant new writer.” —Maggie Gee, author of *The White Family*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Anna Raverat grew up in North Yorkshire and studied English at King’s College, Cambridge University. She lives in London with her three children and is a consultant in organization and team development and leadership. *Lover* is her U.S. debut.

Guide written by Patricia Daneman