

BOOK CLUB in a bag

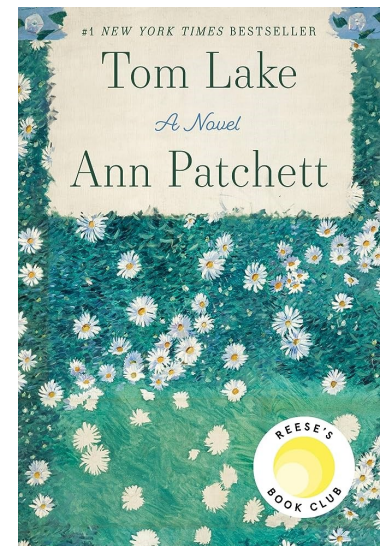


Tom Lake

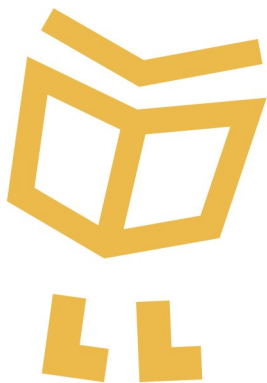
Ann Patchett

Discussion Questions

1. For what reasons is "Our Town," the play by Thornton Wilder, significant and lasting? What about the play made Lara say that it "spoke to us, made us feel special and seen"? When Lara says, "ours was that kind of town," what might she mean?
2. What issues explored in "Our Town" are particularly relevant to this novel, TOM LAKE?
3. Consider Lara's three daughters: Emily, Maisie and Nell. What qualities and characteristics most define each of them? What does each care about? What does each of their intended professions suggest about who they are?
4. Why does Lara decide to tell her daughters the story of her relationship with Peter Duke? What concerns her about doing so? Generally speaking, what are the potential benefits or harms of parents sharing their personal life stories, their successes and failures with their children?
5. In what various ways is the environment of Tom Lake strikingly different for Lara? How might such a landscape have influenced her? What does she mean that her "unremarkable room with the remarkable view of Middle-of-Nowhere, Michigan, was everything that had ever been written about freedom and possibility"?
6. What is so powerful about the Nelsons' cherry farm when the young actors all visit for the first time? What is particularly valuable about such a landscape for Lara, even decades later, when she tells of it as her happiest day at Tom Lake?
7. Lara admits to Maisie's dog, Hazel, that her acting career fell apart not because she wasn't very good, but because she "had ceased to be brave." What might this mean? Why does Lara not only not feel regret about the end of acting, but feel like she "just missed getting hit by a train"?
8. What are the implications of Lara's "simple truth about life: you will forget much of it"?
9. What does Lara mean when she says, "good marriages are never as interesting as bad affairs"? What's important about this idea? What are the many and particular qualities of Joe and Lara's relationship that make it so solid and enduring?
10. Lara comes to realize that "Our Town" taught her that "the beauty and the suffering are equally true." What does she mean? Why is this such a valuable lesson? What is the relationship between beauty and suffering? What are the implications of this regarding how to live life well?



BOOK CLUB in a bag



About the Author

Ann Patchett is the author of novels, most recently the #1 *New York Times* bestselling *Tom Lake*, works of non-fiction, and children's books. She has been the recipient of numerous awards, including the PEN/Faulkner, the Women's Prize for Fiction in the UK, and the Book Sense Book of the Year. Her novel *The Dutch House* was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize. Her work has been translated into more than thirty languages, and *Time* magazine named her one of the 100 Most Influential People in the World. President Biden awarded her the National Humanities Medal in recognition of her contributions to American culture. She lives in Nashville, Tennessee, where she is the owner of Parnassus Books.

This book may be available for download as an eBook. For more information, please visit lpl.overdrive.com or call 519-661-4600.

Need titles for your next book club? Visit lpl.ca/bookclubinabag

Sources:

<https://guides.rcls.org/c.php?g=1359154>

<https://www.harpercollins.com/blogs/authors/ann-patchett-20148283029440>

