



Discussion Questions: ***Back When We Were Grownups*** by Anne Tyler

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ABOUT THE BOOK:

After presiding over a disastrous family picnic in Baltimore, fifty-three-year old Rebecca Davitch suddenly begins to question who she is . . . and how she has turned into someone other than herself. The story of how she answers this question is beguiling, funny and deeply moving.

1. "How on earth did I get like this?" wonders Rebecca at the start of the novel about the person she has become. Have you ever had a moment like this? Did you end up with the life you thought you would have?
2. While many people think longingly of the road not traveled, Rebecca decided to take it. Is this a good idea? If you were going to do so, what steps would you have to take?
3. Do you think Rebecca would have stayed with Will if she had not met Joe?
4. Rebecca suggests to NoNo that "all of us love people at least partly for their usefulness." Do you agree?
5. Do you think Min Foo is going to discard Hakim as she has her other husbands?
6. Rebecca reflects that marriage leads to "knowing more than you should about the other person." Do you agree?
7. Tina's visit leads Rebecca to observe her life from the uncomfortable perspective of an outsider. Have you ever had that experience with a guest?
8. Rebecca describes Tina, Joe's first wife, as "the distant, alluring mystery woman whose edges had not been worn dull by the constant minor abrasions of daily contact." What has Tina gained and lost because of the distance she placed between herself and her daughters?
9. Rebecca watches NoNo change as she takes on parenthood. Discuss how becoming a parent change people and how it does not.

10. Rebecca and NoNo decide to take on instant parenthood. What are the challenges and rewards of choosing such a path?
11. Rebecca wants to believe that there are grander motivations in history than family and friends, but concludes that there are not. Do you agree?
12. This novel explores the selective and faulty nature of memory. How accurate do you think your own memories are? What do you remember and what don't you remember?
13. Is the conditional and faulty nature of human memory a blessing or a curse?
14. Will reminds Rebecca that she wanted a big family with all the rituals, a fact Rebecca had forgotten about the girl she once was. How would Rebecca have forgotten such an important piece of information about herself?
15. Why is Will so determined to see Rebecca as she is not?
16. How do you think Poppy's memories of Rebecca's first birthday party at Open Arms would compare with Rebecca's?
17. Zeb never married. Do you think he has been waiting for Rebecca all these years? What do you think will happen with Rebecca and Zeb? Who will have to make the first move if this relationship is ever to get off the ground?
18. Does Rebecca's family see her as a three-dimensional person by the end of this novel?
19. How do you think each of Rebecca's daughters would describe her?
20. Which is your favorite character in this novel and why?
21. If you could ask the author one question about this novel, what would you ask?
22. Why did your group choose this novel? Are you happy with your choice? What book is coming up next?