



Reading Group Gold

This Must Be The Place

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Questions for Discussion

1. Very early on, Max Morris says to Arthur that, “sometimes you let the people you love believe what they want to believe.” Do you think that’s true? How does that statement play in to the rest of the novel?

2. What role does food play in the novel? Mona bakes cakes for a living, and also feeds her tenants each night – it’s pointed out several times that both Mona’s meals and cakes are especially delicious. Do you think her skill with food is meant to imply something about her personality as well? Is she a nurturing person in general?

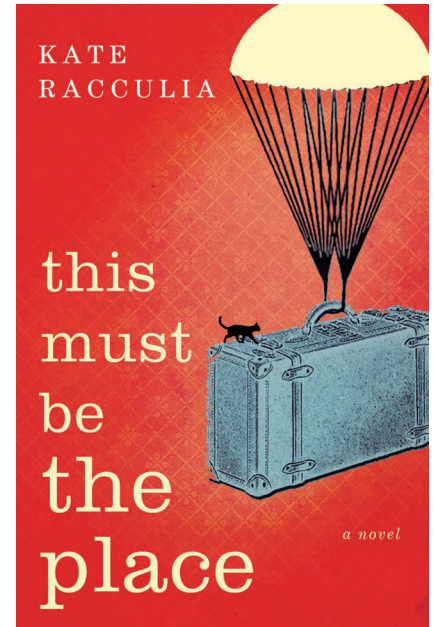
3. The novel opens with a young Amy on a bus headed towards Hollywood. What were your initial perceptions of teenage Amy? How did your opinion of her change over the course of the novel?

4. We never get to see Amy as an adult, except through Arthur’s eyes. Do you think she was a different person as an adult with Arthur than she was as a teenager with Mona? Or are Mona and Arthur’s perceptions of Amy just different? Are they reconcilable? Do you think it’s possible for people to ever change in any fundamental ways?

5. Mona notes fairly early on that, “the past was never past. It always came back to kick your ass.” Is that true for the characters of the novel? In what ways?

6. The novel follows the development of several romances, some between adults and some between teenagers. Think of Oneida and Eugene’s relationship and compare it to Mona and Arthur’s. How do age and maturity alter the development of each relationship? How do the teens act differently? Do you think there’s anything to be said for the naïveté that the teenagers bring to their relationship? Or the experience that the adults bring to their relationship?

7. Secrets play a large role in the novel. Do you think that any of the secrets that are revealed should have been kept? Do you think that one person can ever truly know another? Or are we all bound in some way by the secrets that we keep?



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8. When Oneida's real parentage was finally revealed, were you surprised? How does Oneida deal with the revelation? Do you think that it changed her feelings about Mona in anyway?
9. Eugene tells Oneida that "life is art." What do you think he means by that? How does the novel illustrate the point?
10. Art is a major theme of the novel. Many of the major characters are artists: Amy, a puppeteer and animator; Arthur, a photographer; Astor, a forger; Mona, a baker. How does each person's chosen medium suit his or her personality?
11. The novel also deals closely with misconceptions – how do art and misconceptions relate to one another? What do you think the novel is trying to say about art? What do you think of the fact that Oneida goes on to become an art historian? That Eugene becomes a forger?
12. In Eugene's dream, Joseph Cornell tells him that he will grow up and die, and that "it's the single greatest thing that will ever happen to you." What do you think this is supposed to mean? How is this a novel about growing up? Do all of the characters mature in one way or another – even the ones who are already "grown up"?