



An Unchoreographed Life

Questions for Bookclubs

In order to provide book clubs with thought-provoking questions, it is necessary to reveal important aspects of the plot. We suggest that you finish the book before you read on.

'I felt it had something of a feel of Joanna Trollope about it and would appeal to a range of readers interested in traditional and non-traditional families and life paths.' Liz Broomfield

'Beautifully written and so thought provoking, Alison and Belinda will stay with you long after you reach the final page.' Louise Voss

'Davis is a phenomenal writer, whose ability to create well rounded characters that are easy to relate to feels effortless.' Compulsion Reads

- At the beginning of the novel, Belinda is six years old. It is her daughter's growing awareness of the world around her that is the ticking time-bomb as far as Alison is concerned. How far do you think Alison was in denial about her circumstances and her future prospects?
- Did you like Alison? Did you think that the author intended for you to like her, or if it is important to the book whether you like her or not?
- What do you think that the use of dual narrators contributed to the story? What did it add to your understanding of the relationship between mother and daughter?
- Who (or what) put the greater pressure on Alison to succeed as a ballerina?
- How did Alison's knowledge of the sacrifices her parents had made for her inform her decision-making when she seduced the artistic director?
- How did you react to Alison's parents' stance when she announced to them that she was pregnant? How far do you think they were to blame for what followed?
- Do you think Alison's was a simple case of post-natal depression, or was she suffering from a complete identity crisis as a result of no longer being able to dance? Which was worse?
- As a ballerina, Alison had been trained to block out pain. In her new life, whenever Alison was faced with a situation she didn't want to confront, she retreated inside herself and became the dancer she

once was. As a reader, would you have wanted to see the arrest and abuse scenes more clearly, or did you prefer the technique that the author used?

- At a time when she was desperately looking for a solution to her financial circumstances, Andrew's offer proved too attractive to refuse. And yet it seems that at least some of Alison's initial reservations about Andrew were correct. So what swayed her?
- How do you think Alison's isolation from her parents at an early age affected her? Did you think that her subsequent self-imposed isolation from her fellow students at the Royal School of Ballet was a natural consequence? What about her relationship with Collette?
- On the face of it, Andrew and Collette appeared to have everything. And yet it turned out that theirs was by no means the perfect marriage. Was Alison naïve to accept Andrew's offer or do you think she chose to ignore the all-too-obvious risks?
- Did you think that Collette was acting in collusion with Andrew to effectively 'snare' Alison?
- Was Alison used or did you think that there were some ways in which Andrew was also a victim?
- In which ways does Alison succeed and fail as a mother?
- Many of the novel's pivotal scenes are set in Pelican (St James's) Park. How did you feel about the choice of location? What do you think the park represented?
- How did you feel about the child-minder, Kirsty? Was she acting with malicious intent, or did she have good reason to be concerned for Belinda's welfare?
- What was Jenny's role in the novel?
- After her second arrest, how did you feel about Alison's decision to turn to her mother for help? Was this a last resort? Could she have done so earlier? Did you feel that Alison's mother was entitled to a relationship with her grandchild? Was putting Belinda in her grandmother's care something Alison would have done had she not been desperate?
- Was it fair of Alison's mother to compare their situations when Alison had to face the prospect of losing Belle? Did this change the way you felt about her?
- At a time when the laws about prostitution look likely to change (2014), did this book make you think differently about any of the issues? Had prostitution been legal, how would this have affected the outcome? How would it have affected the way you feel about Alison?
- Were you satisfied with the book's ending? What do you think the future holds for Alison and Belinda?