



# Colorado Book Club Resource

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR WILD GAME : MY MOTHER, HER LOVER, AND ME BY ADRIENNE BRODEUR

1. What do we learn about the author from how she tells her tale—both what she chooses to tell, and the tone of voice in which she tells it? Is this a story about her mother’s misbehavior, or about something else?
2. Revisit the Mary Oliver poem, “The Uses of Sorrow,” that serves as an epigraph to the book. Do you see the darkneses in your own life as gifts, or would you wish some of them away? Is growth possible without suffering? Consider Margot’s advice to Rennie that happiness is a choice. Is gratitude in the face of life’s difficulties a habit of mind we can choose to cultivate?
3. Malabar makes life more interesting for everyone, including us as readers. Do you feel a little bewitched by her charms? Would she be as compelling without her flaws? Do you admire her? If so, in what ways?
4. How does Malabar upend traditional roles for women, and how does she subscribe to them? How has her mother Vivian’s influence shaped her sense of identity, as well as her relationships with other women? Rennie’s friend Kyra diagnoses Malabar as lonely, and says that loneliness is about not being known for who you are. Does Malabar know herself?
5. Malabar’s marriage to Charles and her romance with Ben occur within a privileged milieu at a time when gender roles were narrowly defined. What are the values of this social set, and how do they do harm to its members? Can the follies of the characters be blamed in part on an unhealthy worldview?
6. Compare Ben’s conduct during the affair to Malabar’s. Whom do you feel more sympathy for? When you look at all the adult characters in the book, is there a villain in this story?
7. Rennie is a victim of harm, a beneficiary of kindness, and an actor—for good and ill—in other people’s lives. Which of these roles does she have the most difficulty acknowledging? Do we learn more about how to live from our parents’ mistakes or from what they do right?
8. "Understandable but not acceptable" becomes Jack and Rennie’s mantra in light of the affair. Where does Rennie demonstrate that she doesn’t accept her mother’s behavior? Do you think she might hold her mother more accountable? Who is helped more by forgiveness: the forgiven or the forgiver?



***This discussion sheet is property of the Colorado State Library’s Book Club Resource. Please return this sheet along with all of the books in the book bag to the Colorado State Library – Courier Code C912. Contact [bookclub@coloradovirtuallibrary.org](mailto:bookclub@coloradovirtuallibrary.org) with questions or concerns.***



# Colorado Book Club Resource

9. How does Rennie's involvement in her mother's deception hurt her relationship with herself? And how does it damage her relationships with other people in her life? By the end of the book, have all the wounded relationships been healed?
10. Rennie manages to separate from her mother, assume ownership of her own life, and chart a new path. What are her strengths, and how do we see her using them first to help her mother, and later, using them as a force for good in her own life? What other resources does she employ to help her become the person she wants to be? Does she inspire you to address aspects of your own life that are holding you back?
11. Rennie has two experiences where time collapses and the layers of her past rush in: just before her wedding and after she gives birth to her daughter (pp. 176, 223). What do these moments do for her? Have you had a similar experience that has granted you a profound glimpse of your life?
12. Throughout the story, secrets are kept—about Christopher, about the affair, about Charles' aneurysm—ostensibly to protect others from pain. Is there anything wrong with this logic? The author says that lying comes with the territory when your parents get divorced, and you don't share information about one parent if you think it will disturb the other. Do lies of omission pave the way for bigger lies? Is a lie ever completely harmless?
13. Is it fair of Malabar to demand that Rennie never sell the necklace? Which verdict of an appraisal would be worse: for the necklace to be valuable or valueless? Would you do as Rennie does and avoid the question? Is there an heirloom in your family that's been divisive?
14. The author shows us Cape Cod as a place of beauty, history, and bounty. In what ways does the setting contribute to the meaning of the story?
15. Rennie actively reads to help her clarify and articulate her experience. Margot tells her, "You have no idea how much you can learn about yourself by plunging into someone else's life (138)." What light does this story shed on your own experience as a parent or child? Have books helped you make sense of your own life?

***Questions issued by the publisher.***



***This discussion sheet is property of the Colorado State Library's Book Club Resource. Please return this sheet along with all of the books in the book bag to the Colorado State Library – Courier Code C912. Contact [bookclub@coloradovirtuallibrary.org](mailto:bookclub@coloradovirtuallibrary.org) with questions or concerns.***