

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Amanda, Patrick, and Marissa have analytical backgrounds. They trust in data and evidence. How do their relationships with reality change throughout the novel? How do each of them reconcile their principles with their shifting beliefs?
2. Is the neuroscience sprinkled throughout the novel helpful for putting Amanda's condition in context? Do you see parallels between Amanda's condition and Marissa's mathematical pursuits?
3. Why do you think Patrick agrees to help Amanda? Do you agree with his choice?
4. Amanda breaks her marriage vows and later has an affair with a married man. Are these two transgressions fundamentally different? Why do you think she transgresses? Are her shortcomings forgivable? Do you think she's a good person?
5. What do you think causes Amanda's false pregnancy? Do you think she needs it in some way? How do you think it helps her? How does it harm her?
6. As badly as Derrick claims to want to save his marriage, why do you think he is unwilling to be a father to Amanda's child? Do you agree with his hardline stance? Is Amanda unreasonable to ask him to try?
7. Do you think Amanda's arc would be different without Meredith? What about Meredith's growth? What role, if any, do you think Amanda plays in that?
8. What do you think of Patrick and Marissa's relationship? Should either of them have done anything differently? Could it have ended in any other way?
9. Patrick believes Marissa is delusional. Her peers in the mathematics community choose to focus on the byproducts of her efforts. Do you think Marissa was delusional? What do you think she discovered? Could she have reasons other than she gave for destroying her work?
10. What do you think of Marissa's relationship with Jenn? Do you think Marissa should have done anything differently? On page 182, Marissa muses that the concept of rock bottom is a myth. "The streets were full of people who'd hit rock bottom. There were no miracles waiting there." Do you agree with her?
11. How does Marissa change from the opening of the novel to the close? Do you think her ending is fair? What do you think is next for her? Do you think she'll return to math? Do you think she'll have children? If so, what kind of mother will she be?

12. How are Patrick and Rob different? How are they similar? Can their similarities and differences be traced to their shared childhood?
13. When we meet Rob, he is alienated from his wife and daughter. He claims to take full responsibility for the failure of his marriage. Do you believe him? Can one person ever be fully responsible for the failure of a marriage? By the end of the book, it seems that his relationship with his daughter has changed. Do you think Rob has changed? If so, how? How is he the same?
14. What do you think happened to Derrick? Do you agree with Marissa's actions?