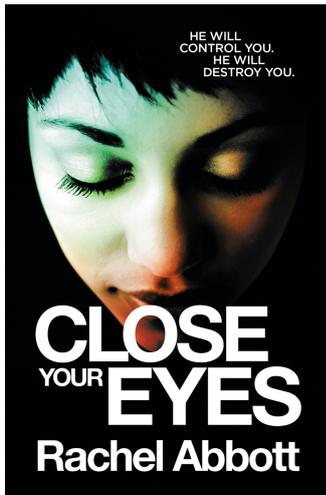


Reading Group Questions

WARNING: *These questions and discussion points contain spoilers. Please do not continue reading this document if you haven't already read **Close Your Eyes.***

SUMMARY



Close Your Eyes tells the story of Martha Porter – or, as she was originally called, India Kalu. Martha left her home when she found she was pregnant with her son, Alfie – now five years old. She had to escape for him, if not for herself.

Since then, she's been running. She's changed her name and does everything in her power to hide her identity from anyone who knows her.

And then disaster strikes. Genevieve Strachan – her boss's wife – is murdered. She can't allow herself to be questioned by the police. She has too much to lose – possibly her freedom, and almost definitely her child.

Tom Douglas together with his inspector, Becky Robinson, is investigating Genevieve's murder. Tom believes the husband should be a suspect, but unfortunately he has a cast iron alibi, and everything is pointing to Martha Porter. He has to find her, to question her and to understand why she has been hiding for so many years.

Close Your Eyes is a story about control in many forms, from the slow insidious dependency of one person on another, to psychological manipulation and demands of absolute obedience.

The points below are merely suggestions for discussion topics. I am sure you will find many others.

DISCUSSION POINTS

1. What was your initial reaction to Martha? How did that change as you read more of the book?
2. When Martha learns that the police may be coming to visit the office, she runs. What other options might she have considered?
3. Was she right to keep Alfie from his father? Were there any other choices?
4. When Martha (then known as India) was first taken to Lakeside, what were your thoughts on the parents' reaction to their friends and family in London? Should

they have kept their win a secret? Or maybe they should have shared it all with friends? What choices would you make?

5. Martha has three choices: she can stay where she is and hope that Aram hasn't given the police evidence of her involvement in Leah's death; she can run as far as possible – maybe to Northumberland as planned; or she can return to Lakeside and attempt to free herself from Aram's control. Which option would you have chosen, and why?
6. When Aram first arrived at Lakeside, at what point in the story did you suspect him of not being the saviour that Nicola was hoping for?
7. Should Joel have reacted differently to Aram's presence in his home? He loved his wife, and clearly felt that he owed her so much. By sending Aram away, he feared he would break her. What else could he have done?
8. Throughout the book there are other examples of cult-like behaviour (on a much smaller scale). Niall underpays his staff, telling them they will get their rewards if they give their support; Elise expects everyone to agree with her, or she will belittle them. We've all met people like this – but what approach can be taken to reduce their power?
9. Martha (India) feels compelled to tell Aram that Leah is leaving Lakeside and is going to expose him for his behaviour. What do you imagine were her feelings at that time – her fears and hopes?
10. Throughout the book, Nicola has come more and more under Aram's spell. Discuss her dependence and what might have caused her to be in his thrall.
11. When Martha is taken to the police station following her arrest, should she have told the police about Leah's death? Discuss how she could have made different decisions, and what the likely outcomes would have been.
12. What was your reaction when Nicola mentions burying Aram with 'the others'? Should Martha have considered being complicit to save her mother?