

Reading Group Questions

SUMMARY

WARNING: DO NOT READ THIS DOCUMENT IF YOU HAVE NOT READ THE BOOK!

Stranger Child is a story of a family hit by tragedy when a young wife and mother is killed in a car accident. Her six-year-old daughter, Natasha – who was in the car at the time – disappears from the scene. The reader is aware from the start that this was more than a simple accident.

Natasha – or Tasha, as she is known to the family – is never heard from again until she appears in the family kitchen more than six years later. She seems to have come home willingly, but to the dismay of her father and his new wife, Emma, she clearly resents them all – even her baby brother, Ollie, who has immediately taken to his new sister.

As the story unfolds, the reader is given an insight into the life that Tasha has led since her disappearance, and the pressure she is under from her past and her present.

Stranger Child is a story of betrayal at many levels, and of sacrifices willingly made to protect others.

DISCUSSION POINTS

1. Do you think Emma feels threatened in more ways than one by the reappearance of her stepdaughter, and if so what do you believe her concerns are?
2. At what point in the story did you start to have your doubts about David's integrity, and what was it that alerted you to this?
3. Tom is very affected by Emma and talks about how much he has missed her. Do you think it crosses a line for a police officer to work on a case in which they have a level of emotional involvement? If Tom had been honest with his colleagues, what might have been the impact on the events on that followed?
4. Do you think that Tasha has had anything like a family relationship where she has been living prior to her return? To what extent do you feel that the first six years of her life may have influenced her acceptance of the life she was forced to live?
5. It can be very hard to work out what Tasha really makes of her new family when she returns to David and Emma – what do you think her true feelings are for her new baby brother and stepmother, and when do you think she starts to find the task she has been set hard emotionally?
6. How do you think Emma feels when she finds out about David's involvement in Tasha's kidnap? Were there any hints that things weren't as they appeared? Had

he survived, how do you think their relationship would have panned out from this point, particularly with regard to his role in caring for Ollie?

7. Is Jack a “good” person? He is certainly a dynamic and charismatic character but also is involved in a criminal underworld. What do you think Tom’s views on this really are? What do you think are the similarities and differences between the two brothers?
8. What do you think would be the most likely outcome for a child like Tasha? Do you think she would ever return to Emma and live with her and Ollie? Why do you think she wasn’t reunited with Emma before the end of the book?
9. Tom and Leo’s relationship has changed in this novel – why do you think this is and in what way is each of them responsible for this? Can their relationship work like this, and if not what would they have to do to make it work?
10. At the end of the story, Tom has once again lost his brother, Jack – although he now knows he is alive. How do you think Tom might feel about this, given the danger to Jack if he returns?