

THE PLAYGROUND

A Michelle Lee Novel

Book Club Questions

1. Anna Reed grows up in a small town in Southern Utah. What did she mean when she said growing up there always made her feel “stuck”? How do you think this influenced her decision later to go to extreme measures to make money?
2. Do you feel the choice to “move bags” was warranted by Anna’s family’s financial needs? Do you think this obligation was the only reason Anna dove into this operation?
3. In *The Playground*, Anna rationalizes that “moving bags” is much like a pharmacy holds drugs – she’s just the middle-woman. Does this bargaining have any validity?
4. How might Anna’s life have been different if Benoit hadn’t died?
5. Had Benoit and Anna’s relationship not been cut short, how do you think Anna would have reacted to discovering Benoit’s involvement in a drug operation (by laundering money)? Do you think Anna would have walked away from the relationship?
6. When Anna brings other women into the operation, do you think she did this out of entirely unselfish motives?
7. Do you think Anna’s naivety about drugs helped her accomplish such a sophisticated operation? Do you think someone more apt to the dangers of such a world would have been more hesitant to dive into it?
8. Do you think Joel cared for Anna? In what ways did their relationship change from the beginning to the end of the book?
9. Was Marco's reaction to finding out about Anna's operation plausible?

10. In one date night scene, Anna vents to Marco:

"I shouldn't even have to ask (for help with the kids)! ...Nobody has to ask me to work full-time, plus pack lunches, do laundry, run to schools, and coordinate dinner! I don't have some magic life coordinator telling me what to do next!"

Have you ever related to these feelings?

11. *The Playground* is the first in a series titled "Secret Lives of Moms," in which each book will reveal a secret life of a woman. How many women do you know who have a "Secret Life," whether innocent or scandalous?

12. For many women, the instinct to protect their families is substantial. In today's public news headlines (2019), I read two articles where women made questionable decisions concerning their kids: one where mothers cheated to get their children into colleges, and another where a single mother resorted to prostitution to pay for rent. Is it believable that a respected woman of the community might wind up creating a drug operation of Anna's magnitude?

13. When Anna goes back to Utah and sees her mother, she cries on her mom's shoulder (an unnatural thing to do, she notes), and tells her mother:

"I didn't understand how hard it was to be a mom. I didn't understand the sacrifices you'd make as a mother; the things you'd do for your family... I just didn't know because I wasn't a mom."

How relevant are those statements? If you are now a mother, how has your perspective on your mother's actions changed?

14. We glean that Anna and Eloise combined funds to open a foundation that supported women. Do you feel that this was a justifiable use of the money? If no, what do you think Anna should have done with the money?

15. For a broader discussion, are mothers put on a moral pedestal that is far higher than that of other members of society? How so? Is it fair? Is it to be expected?