

LITERARY BOOK CLUB

June 2018 Selection

***Before I Let You Go* by Kelly Rimmer**

Despite having endured a disturbing childhood together, as adult sisters Lexie and Annie are worlds apart. Lexie is a doctor, successful and happily engaged to Sam. Annie is addicted to heroin—a thief, a liar, and unable to remain clean despite the fact that she is pregnant. After being estranged for two years, Annie returns to Lexie’s life desperate for help. She is critically ill, but afraid to seek medical treatment, knowing that under Alabama law illegal drug use during pregnancy is a felony. To prevent the baby from being placed in foster care, Lexie agrees to assume responsibility for her niece. While Annie struggles in court-ordered rehab, Lexie finds her carefully ordered life coming undone, as she desperately tries to support and re-connect with her sister while not enabling Annie’s destructive habits. Both sisters are forced to confront the echoes of pain that linger from their difficult childhood, and forge a new—stronger—bond, while ensuring the demons from their past have no place in the future.

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Discussion Questions:

1. Which of the two sisters did you relate to most, Lexie or Annie? Were there any characters in the story you didn’t like?
2. The story deals extensively with Annie’s addiction and the consequences of it for her personally, as well as for her sister and daughter. Did you feel this was a realistic portrayal?
3. Did the story challenge your perspective on addiction in any way? How do you see things differently?



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4. Over the lifetime of her relationship with Annie, Lexie makes countless decisions to try to help her sister. Would you have made the same decisions? Where is the line between supporting and enabling?
5. Do you think addicts are entirely responsible for their addiction? What role, if any, does childhood trauma such as Annie's play?
6. How did you feel Luke's role helped or hindered Annie's recovery? Did you see him as a positive or negative influence?
7. The laws referenced through the novel are enforced in a number of US states. How do you feel about the criminalization of substance abuse in pregnancy? Were you aware of these laws before reading *Before I Let You Go*?
8. Do you think the author dealt with such a contentious issue in a balanced way?
9. Which scene in *Before I Let You Go* affected you the most, and why?
10. If you have siblings, did this story make you think about your own relationship with them? What stood out for you in terms of how we deal with family issues?
11. Robert is generally made out to be a violent man, and yet throughout Annie's adult life he helped try to get her well. How do you reconcile the two sides to his character?
12. Were you satisfied with the ending? Did the story end as you expected or did you envision a different resolution for the sisters? Do you think Annie's outcome was inevitable?
13. Who would you recommend *Before I Let You Go* to?



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Recommendations:

- If you liked *Before I Let You Go*, you might like *The Bookshop at Water's End*
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- You might also enjoy *Small Great Things*
(<http://www.booksamillion.com/p/9780345544971>)