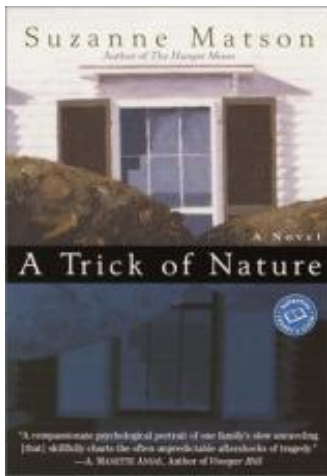


A Trick of Nature

by Suzanne Matson



About the Book

Former high school sweethearts Greg and Patty Goodman are happily married with two charming daughters. They're comfortable in their well kept home, living the ideal life with neighborhood barbecues, weekly golf games, and hours in the garden. But in a flash of lightning, one trick of nature, their world crumbles, and Patty and Greg must reassess the assumptions they hold about themselves and their relationships. With the same "crisp, clean writing" and "compassionately drawn characters" (*The New York Times Book Review*) of her previous novel, **The Hunger Moon**, Matson deftly provides an intimate look at marriage, parenthood, and the nature of trust and family.

Discussion Guide

1. Greg Goodman is often quick to judge other people--and to find their actions wanting. He passes judgment, at various points, on his friend Mitch, on his daughters and wife, on Lorraine Morrison, on Tim Phelps's father. But the world is also judging Greg--most notably for his role in Tim's death. Do you think Greg's understanding of right and wrong changes over the course of the novel? As a reader, do you find yourself passing judgment on Greg? On the other characters?
2. The twins, Kiley and Melissa, are fifteen when the book begins, and going through many changes and awakenings of their own. How do the girls' experiences echo Greg's and Patty's? Do you think Greg and Patty are good parents to their teenaged daughters? How might they have been better?
3. **A Trick of Nature** is filled with rich descriptions of place, from the Goodman's suburban house, to Patty's studio apartment, to the club where Lorraine works. How do the various characters' reactions to these places reveal their inner fears and longings?
4. When Patty finds out that Greg has had an affair, does she react in the way you'd expect her to? What surprises you

about Patty? What do you admire in her? What do you see as her weaknesses or limitations?

5. Lorraine Morrison lives in a very different world from Greg, but at the same time, the two characters have a great deal in common. How do you understand the nature of their relationship and the emotional journey they take together?

6. Joy Scinterro, the Channel Nine News reporter, appears sporadically throughout the novel to ask pointed questions of Greg. Why do you think Suzanne Matson included her in the book?

7. At the end of **A Trick of Nature**, we read that Greg "felt completely taken apart, deconstructed, the parts of himself scattered so far he didn't think he'd ever find them." Who is this new Greg? What does his future look like? How do you understand his relationship to Patty at the novel's close? To his daughters? To himself?

Author Bio

Suzanne Matson teaches in the English Department at Boston College.

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