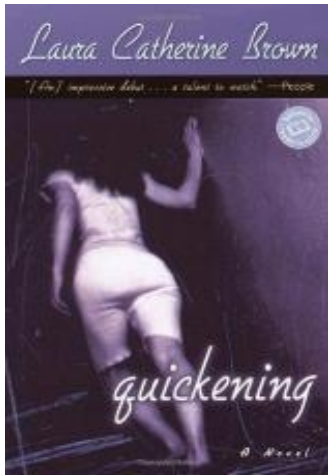


Quickening

by Laura Catherine Brown



About the Book

All lives contain growth spurts-physical ones, most obviously, but intellectual and emotional ones as well. Laura Catherine Brown's powerful first novel focuses on just such a moment in the life of a determined young woman. For nineteen-year-old Mandy Boyle, going away to college means a chance to sever ties with her blue-collar family, notably her controlling mother, and strike out on her own. But Mandy is soon transformed in ways she had never imagined. Her father's sudden death sets in motion a wrenching chain of events that forces Mandy to grow up fast, resulting in an unwanted pregnancy. The stage when a fetus first shows signs of having a life of its own is known as the "quickenning." This is the story of Mandy's adult quickening-an engrossing read about real people making real choices...and dealing with the unexpected turns and surprises that come with growing up.

Discussion Guide

1. In many ways, *Quickening* can be described as a coming-of-age novel. Do you agree with this description? In the end, do you feel that Mandy does come of age? How would you characterize the journey she takes from innocence to experience?
2. What role does Gert, Mandy's mother, play in her daughter's life? Did you find Gert to be a sympathetic character, given her own background?
3. How do you suppose Mandy's life might have been different if her father hadn't passed away?
4. While reading *Quickening*, how did you feel about Mandy's relationship with Booner? Were you frustrated with her, or was her choice of Booner an understandable one?

5. How would you describe the roles of Mandy's two friends-- Barb and Tracy--in Mandy's life?
6. What is the significance of the title *Quickening*? At what point in the book does Mandy's quickening occur? Why do you believe it occurs there?
7. What about the role of alcohol and drugs in Mandy's life: How do drugs and alcohol affect her, and how does Mandy's relationship to them change during the course of the story?
8. What do you make of Gert's rediscovery of religion? And how would you characterize her relationship with Pastor Bob? What do you think is being said about the role of religion in Gert's life?
9. Do you think of *Quickening* as having a feminist point of view? Why, or why not?
10. Mandy makes a choice to terminate her pregnancy in the novel. Did this seem like the right choice for Mandy? Was there a point in reading the novel where you weren't sure what her decision would be?
11. Mandy discovers photography as an art form and an outlet for her creativity during the course of *Quickening*. Do you think that her discovery of herself as an artist has anything to do with her coming-of-age? And if so, how?
12. What do you suppose will happen to Mandy after the final pages of the novel? Has she left Booner for good? Will she have some sort of relationship with her mother? Will she go back to school and make something of herself? Where might Mandy be in ten years?

Author Bio

Critical Praise

"Reminiscent of Wally Lamb's *She's Come Undone*, Brown's novel realistically captures the tension between family myths and realities...Recommended."--*Library Journal*

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