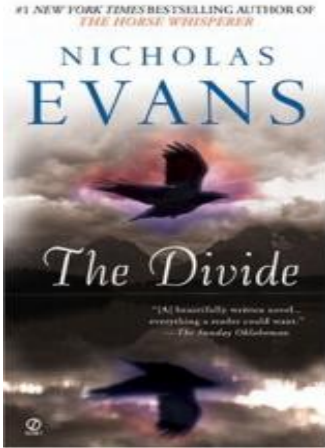


The Divide

by Nicholas Evans



About the Book

Two backcountry skiers find the body of a young woman embedded in the ice of a remote mountain creek. All through the night, police work with arc lights and chain saws to dig her out. But identification doesn't take as long. Abbie Cooper is wanted for murder and acts of eco-terrorism, and her picture is on law-enforcement computers all across America. But just how did she die? And what was the trail of events that led this joyous, golden child of a loving family so tragically astray?

In a journey of discovery and redemption, from the streets of New York to the daunting grandeur of the Rocky Mountains, **The Divide** delves into the dynamics of a fractured family and their struggle with the pain of lost happiness. Electrifying and heartbreaking, master storyteller Nicholas Evans's new novel delivers an extraordinary tale about the timeless power of nature, and about the yearnings, hopes, and disillusionments that connect-and separate-all men and women.

Discussion Guide

1. In the beginning of the novel, when Ben and Sarah go to Montana to identify Abbie's body, did you feel that Sarah's treatment of Ben was justified? Did your opinion of her treatment of Ben change during the course of the novel? Discuss.
2. On page 59, Sarah tells Ben that Abbie's death is his fault. She eventually rescinds the comment, but do you think Abbie's death is in fact Ben's fault? Do you think the blame lies on any of the Coopers? How do they perpetuate a cycle of blame and guilt amongst themselves? How, in the end, do they break the cycle?
3. When Ben thinks of Eve's house, "he liked it too because it was Eve's and even more because it wasn't his. It made him feel --- as Pablo also made him feel --- unencumbered, that his association was entirely of his own choosing" (pg. 34). Given Ben and Sarah's family, why is it important to Ben to feel unencumbered in his new life with Eve? How is it

different? What does Eve offer him that Sarah could not?

4. Do you think Ben is right to leave Sarah? Did you find him a sympathetic character? Is Sarah sympathetic? Did you find yourself taking sides in the battle of their relationship? Who, in the end, did you relate to? Why?

5. When Ben tells his sister Sally that he's leaving his family, Sally says, "I mean, we're all unhappy! Every couple I know. I don't know of a single goddamned marriage that I could put my hand on my heart and say was happy" (pg. 308). Do you think that it's impossible to be happily married? Do you think this novel is fair to marriage? Is this an accurate depiction of the ways men and women relate to and understand each other?

6. Why is Josh's reaction to Ben leaving so drastically different than the reaction of his mother and sister? In what ways does he actually thrive in the destruction of his family? Why do you think that happens?

7. Track Abbie's descent into serious trouble. Why does she go to college in Montana instead of on the East Coast? What pushes her from casual protestor to ecoterrorist? What is she trying to accomplish? Why do you think a pretty girl from a wealthy family would choose to risk her future?

8. Why is Abbie attracted to Rolf? What does he offer her that she can't find elsewhere? Do you think she would have gotten involved with Rolf if Ben hadn't left, or is that just an excuse?

9. Discuss Abbie's relationship with Ty. Do you think Abbie loves Ty? Does Ty truly love Abbie? How is their relationship a catalyst throughout the story? How does it change Abbie's life for the better? For the worse?

10. Do you think it is right for Sarah and Ben to give Abbie money when she asks for it? Do you think, in the same type of situation, you would do the same thing? Why do Sarah and Ben never give up hoping that Abbie will return to them? Why does Abbie go into hiding instead of going to the police?

11. Why does Abbie ultimately decide to turn herself in? Do you think that she would have if Rolf had not found her?

12. Why does Sarah finally forgive Ben? In what ways do each of their children help them find reconciliation?

13. Why is this novel called **The Divide**? How are the Coopers divided throughout the course of the story? How do they bridge the divides between them? Do you think such divisions exist within all families? Discuss.

Author Bio

Nicholas Evans was born and grew up in Worcestershire, England. He studied law at Oxford University, graduating with first class honors, then worked as a journalist for three years on the *Evening Chronicle* in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. He then moved into television, producing films about US politics and the Middle East for a weekly current affairs program called "Weekend World." It was during this time that he traveled a lot and got to know the United States.

In 1982 he started to produce arts documentaries --- about famous writers, painters and filmmakers, several of which

won international awards (films about David Hockney, Francis Bacon, Patricia Highsmith). In 1983 he made a film about the great British director David Lean (*Lawrence of Arabia*, *Doctor Zhivago*, etc). Lean became a friend and mentor and encouraged Evans to switch from fact to fiction.

For the next 10 years, Evans wrote and produced a number of films for television and the cinema. In 1993 he met a blacksmith in the far South-West of England who told him about horse whisperers --- people who have the gift of healing traumatized horses. Evans started work on what was to be his first novel.

Published in the fall of 1995, *THE HORSE WHISPERER* has now sold about 15 million copies across the world. It has been the number one bestseller in about 20 countries and has been translated into 36 languages. It was also made into a movie, starring, produced and directed by Robert Redford.

Evans wrote four more novels: *THE LOOP*, *THE SMOKE JUMPER*, *THE DIVIDE* and *THE BRAVE*. He passed away on August 9, 2022 after suffering a heart attack.

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