

The Quality of Life Report: A Novel

by Meghan Daum



About the Book

Meghan Daum's unforgettable debut novel brings her sharp wit and courageous social commentary to the story of Lucinda Trout, a New York television reporter in search of greener pastures. Moving to the slower-paced, friendly, and vastly more affordable Midwestern town of Prairie City, Lucinda zealously creates a series of televised reports for her New York audience about her newfound quality of life. But when Lucinda falls for eccentric local Mason Clay, her naïveté about the real world leads her down an unexpected path, where she encounters, among other things, a drafty old farmhouse filled with children, an ever-growing menagerie of farm animals, and the harshest winter the region has seen in twenty years. In other words, simplicity just isn't as simple as it is cracked up to be, and "quality of life," Lucinda learns, is much more complicated than she ever imagined.

Discussion Guide

1. If Lucinda was allowed to report without the dictates of the Up Early staff, what are some of the Quality of Life segments you think she might have produced?
2. Space is a character in itself in the novel. Discuss the ways in which Daum uses space to illustrate Trout's journey.
3. Hayley Bopp, the self-exploitative Web diarist-turned-novelist, figures throughout the book. On some level she acts as its villain. Why is she such an important counterpoint to Lucinda?
4. What did you make of Christine? Did you find her lack of personality frustrating? Or were you more troubled by the fact that others imposed such expectations on her based on her physical, racial, and educational credentials?
5. Did Mason's addiction come to you as a surprise? Or could you see the warning signs ahead of Lucinda?

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7. What are some examples of ways in which Lucinda tries to mold others to her own ideals?
8. Lucinda says: "The horror of being judged was nothing compared to the fear of being dull, of being less than endearing, of being written off as a loser." How do you feel about this statement?
9. Why does Lucinda ultimately decide to make Prairie City her home? What is she sacrificing with this decision? What is she gaining?
10. The humor in the novel invites the reader to relate to Lucinda's journey as she experiences it. Could the same story be told with an omniscient narrative? What would be different?

Author Bio

Meghan Daum, author of the essay collection **My Misspent Youth**, has contributed to numerous publications that include *The New Yorker*, *Harper's*, *Vogue*, *O*, *GQ*, and *Glamour*, as well as to National Public Radio's **Morning Edition** and **This American Life**. She was also, for three years, a columnist for *Self*.

Critical Praise

"Daum brings a crisp, wisecracking voice to her novel... an admirably nuanced view of the American heartland."

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