

# The Uncoupling

by Meg Wolitzer

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## About the Book

When the elliptical new drama teacher at Stellar Plains High School chooses for the school play ?Lysistrata? --- the comedy by Aristophanes in which women stop having sex with men in order to end a war --- a strange spell seems to be cast over the school. Or, at least, over the women. One by one, throughout the high school community, perfectly healthy, normal women and teenage girls turn away from their husbands and boyfriends in the bedroom for reasons they don't really understand. As the women worry over their loss of passion, and the men become by turns, unhappy, offended, and, above all, confused, both sides are forced to look at their partners, their shared history, and their sexual selves in a new light.

As she did to such acclaim with the *New York Times* bestseller **The Ten-Year Nap**, Wolitzer tackles a serious issue that has deep ramifications for women's lives, in a way that makes it funny, riveting, and totally fresh, allowing us to see our own lives through her insightful lens.

## Discussion Guide

1. Think about the women in the novel. Each of them reacts to the loss of desire in a different way. How does each woman's reaction reflect the stage of life she is in? Which woman do you think is the most changed at the end of the novel?
2. Willa and Miles both participate in an online world and communicate with each other electronically. How do you think electronic communication changes how relationships are built? Can it be a helpful tool? Can it be problematic?

3. Dory and Robby seem to be the perfect couple at the start of the book. How does the author signal that there might be problems beneath the surface? Think about other books you've read that feature married couples who start off happily married. How are those marriages similar to Dory and Robby's? How are they different?
4. Think about the character of Fran. Do you think she's a force in the book for good? Do you think she's fully aware of the consequences of what she's doing? What price does she pay for her actions?
5. The play *Lysistrata* figures prominently in the book. What do you know about the play *Lysistrata*? How does the action of the play relate to the events of the book? Why do you think the author chose this play to be central to her novel? How does *Lysistrata* relate to the modern world?
6. Think about the spell. How is each woman affected by the spell? What is the significance of the moment each woman comes under the power of the spell? What is the spell a metaphor for? What do you think the author's intention is?
7. While the spell affects the relationship between men and women, *The Uncoupling* also deals with the relationship between mothers and their children. How is Dory and Willa's relationship affected by the spell? What other mother and child relationships are in the book? How are those relationships changed by the end?
8. Neither Marissa nor Leanne is a committed relationship at the start of the book. How does the spell change their view of their own sexuality? How is it different from how the married women are changed?
9. The spell of course is fantasy, but think about real-life parallels. Are there examples in your life where you can see a similar "spell" at work? What are the causes? What are the solutions?
10. How does Wolitzer compare the effects of the spell of *Lysistrata* to the spell of falling in love --- or out of love? Are there other experiences in life that make you feel as if you're falling under enchantment? The spell of a good book, for instance, of the spell of a play?

## Author Bio

Meg Wolitzer is the *New York Times* bestselling author of *THE FEMALE PERSUASION*, *THE INTERESTINGS*, *THE UNCOUPLING*, *THE TEN-YEAR-NAP*, *THE POSITION*, *THE WIFE* and *SLEEPWALKING*. She is also the author of the young adult novel *BELZHAR*. Wolitzer lives in New York City.

## Critical Praise

"Wolitzer writes of a spell cast upon a town --- but she superbly casts it upon the reader as well. This deftly written tale of bewildered women (and their men) is always surprising and always engaging, both funny and serious at the same time, a wonderful read."

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