

Sitting Practice

By Caroline Adderson

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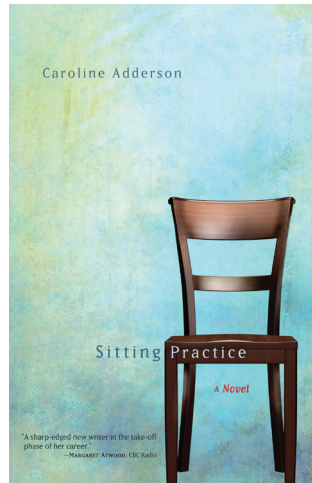
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Reader's Guide

1. The term “sitting practice” is often used to describe meditation. What other meanings might the title *Sitting Practice* have?
2. Several characters in the novel use their spiritual beliefs to justify their behavior. For example, Iliana’s father uses his Christian values to bully the family. Ross’s lapsed Catholicism is his excuse for not making love to Iliana on their first date. Later, his purported Buddhist practice strains their marriage. Discuss the effect religion and spirituality have on the main relationships in the book.
3. Whose behavior more genuinely reflects their moral and spiritual beliefs, Ross’s or Iliana’s? Stevie’s or Ross’s?
4. Iliana is unfaithful to Ross when she has an affair with Stevie. Ross also castigates himself for being unfaithful to his twin sister, Bonnie, but in what ways has he broken faith with Iliana? Are there limits to fidelity?
5. Family members introduce a secondary conflict in the novel. Compare Iliana’s and Ross’s respective treatment of their extended families. What stresses do their families place on their relationship? To what extent are their marital problems due to their not starting a family of their own? How might Stevie’s family background have shaped his character?
6. Ross’s sister Bonnie is an exasperating character, as much to her family in the novel as to readers. What are her good points?
7. As a result of the accident, Iliana is paralyzed from the waist down, but it is Ross who is left impotent. To what extent are their problems in their minds? To what extent in their bodies?
8. A connection is made in the novel between food and sexual appetite. Discuss.
9. There are a number of explicit sexual scenes in the novel, but none of them would appear in a Hollywood movie. What is the author saying about sex and love?
10. After the accident Ross thinks: “Life, that double column of gains and losses, which in the end must cancel each other out, owed Iliana anything she wanted.” Does the affair cancel out Ross’s guilt over the accident? Can this kind of moral accounting ever lead to true forgiveness?
11. Will Ross and Iliana stay married?