

Black Inc. Book Club Notes

TITLE: The Happiness Show

AUTHOR: Catherine Deveny

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SUBJECT: Fiction

About the Book

At thirty-eight, Lizzie Quealy thinks she has things sorted: a happy relationship, a couple of gorgeous kids, a steadfast best friend and a career she loves. But when Lizzie bumps into Tom, an old flame from her globe-trotting twenties, her life begins to unravel.

Tom is her 'unfinished business': the man she might have spent her life with, if things had gone a little differently. Ten years on, the spark is still there – but how far is Lizzie prepared to go to recapture it, and at what cost?

Set in Melbourne, London and Bali, via Tokyo and the Trans-Siberian Express, *The Happiness Show* is a refreshingly honest story about love, fidelity and the messiness of second chances. Sexy and hilarious, it explores the rules and taboos of contemporary relationships – and what happens when they stand in the way of one woman's pursuit of happiness.

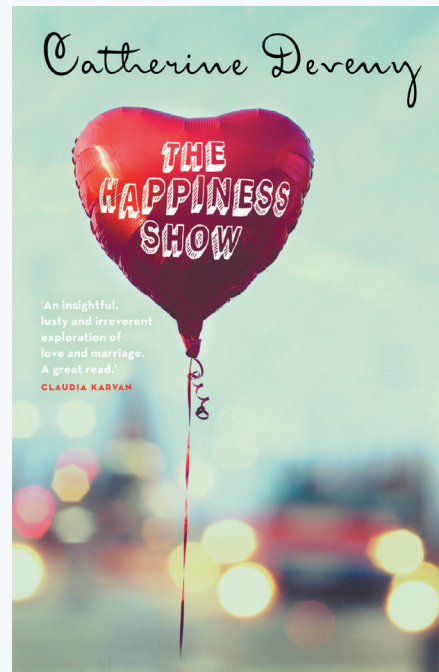
About the Author

Catherine Deveny is a writer, comedian, social commentator and the author of *It's Not My Fault They Print Them* (2007), *Say When* (2008) and *Free to a Good Home* (2009). www.catherinedeveny.com.

Praise for *The Happiness Show*

'A funny, feisty read. I was hooked from the first page.'
– Mia Freedman

'An insightful, lusty and irreverent exploration of love and marriage. A great read.'
– Claudia Karvan



'*The Happiness Show* will resonate with anyone who has looked back fondly at times of untethered responsibility ... Meatier than your average chick lit, *The Happiness Show* explores emotional and physical infidelity, but does so with humour rather than finger-wagging moralising.' – *The Australian*

'*The Happiness Show* will resonate long after you've stopped laughing and long after you've finished the last page.' – *The Hoopla*

'This book is tough to put down.' – *Grazia*

Questions for discussion

1. Lizzie and Tom had a whirlwind love affair in their twenties, and are each other's 'unfinished business' – the person who might have been the one if life had panned out differently. Do you think their relationship would have sustained the same passion if they had married and had kids together?

2. Why do you think Tom and Lizzie had such an amazing relationship? Was it because they were young and travelling and away from home that allowed a different part of themselves to blossom, or was it something else that is intrinsic their strong connection, perhaps that they were meant to be

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together? Do you think that they would be able to recapture this connection later on in their life? Or would it all have gone terribly wrong?

3. Do you think most people have unfinished business? How important is it to pursue these relationships if the opportunity arises later on in life?

4. Lizzie seems to have it all, but when she runs into Tom again, she considers risking it all to be with him. When she mentions this to Jules, Jules asks Lizzie:

“How will you live with yourself?”

To which Lizzie responds: “Jules! How will I live with myself if I don’t?”

What do you think about Lizzie’s response? Is it more important to be faithful and prevent the hurt infidelity can cause, or is it more important to follow your passion and pursue the connections you feel with people? Can the latter be morally acceptable, and if so, why?

5. *The Happiness Show* brings up quite a few questions about fidelity, and also explores whether infidelity can sometimes preserve, or save a relationship. What do you think about this? Is what Tom and Lizzie are thinking about doing wrong? If it’s not, how are their choices justified?

6. Jim and Felicity are both good people and loving partners to Lizzie and Tom. Can you understand why Lizzie and Tom would consider being unfaithful because of their strong connection to each other? Or is what they’re doing simply completely unacceptable in your point of view? How do you feel towards Felicity and Jim, who are both warm and very likeable characters?

7. Do you think that if Lizzie and Tom did pursue an affair, it would have ruined their relationship and the strong connection they feel? Is their connection only strong because it is forbidden?

8. *The Happiness Show* shifts between the present and Lizzie and Tom’s pasts. How does this build anticipation about their relationship and what happens when they accidentally meet up again?