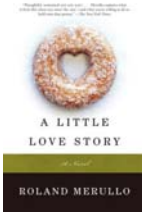


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A Little Love Story Reader's Guide

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Category: Literary Fiction |
Contemporary Romance

READERS GUIDE

Introduction

Jake Entwhistle waits a year after the sad end of his troubling last relationship to begin dating again. When he meets the beautiful Janet Rossi by accident, the timing seems right to take another chance at romance. Both Janet and Jake have reasons to be wary entering a new relationship, but despite a rocky start and some daunting hurdles, they gradually allow themselves to grow closer over the months of their courtship. During this time, however, Janet is struggling in her losing battle with cystic fibrosis. Her only hope—a lung transplant—seems a long shot. What could be a little love story for a different couple becomes a staggering leap of faith for Jake and Janet as they determine to love each other despite the grim prognosis for a future together. With the support of a quirky cast of family and friends, Jake and Janet's relationship is a test of strength that reveals a surprising reserve of courage.

Questions and Topics for Discussion

1. One of the things Jake enjoys most about his relationship with Janet is the comfort of the shared moods that make words seem unnecessary. But in what seem like Janet's final hours, Jake regrets not having said more. What thoughts and feelings should he have expressed more explicitly? What opportunities do you think he's missed for sharing his feelings?

2. What does Jake's work as a carpenter mean to him? Do you think he would continue in this line of work if his paintings earned him enough to make a good living?

3. On their first night together, Janet is standing naked in Jake's apartment when he reflects, "No woman had ever been so naked with me . . . it was almost inhuman to be as naked as that." What does he mean by this? How does Janet make him feel this way?

4. How would you describe Governor Valvelsais's feelings for Janet? Are the qualities he sees in her the same ones that attract Jake?

5. The word *machine* is used several times in the book to describe people in a derogatory way: the September 11 terrorists are described as machines. Ellory refers to unreflective people as machines. But Jake also describes Janet's detachment when administering her own medicine and tests as machine-like. In her case, is the description negative? How does the meaning of the word shift from terrorists and religious automatons to Janet?

6. Why does Janet add her name to the waiting list for a lung transplant? Does she have any real hope that she will survive the wait?

7. In all her confusion, Jake's mother has moments of clarity—and one significant moment of revelation when she recalls "living lobal." Why do you think it takes Jake so long to realize her meaning? Given the circumstances, did you see her blurting out "living low-ball," as Jake heard it, as significant at the time?

8. Before taking his painting of Janet to Dr. Vaskis as a bribe, Jake revises it to reflect his new understanding of her courage. What qualities do you think the painting conveyed before the revision? How do the changes he makes to the painting reflect the changes in Jake and Janet's relationship, and in Jake's openness to love?

9. Both Jake, with his painful, recent, romantic history, and Janet, with her realistically limited expectations for a romantic future, have reasons to be reluctant in exposing their hearts to what seems like a doomed relationship. What is it that makes each of them decide to take the risk?
10. Why does Jake continue to call his sister, though her circumstances and attitude never seem to improve? What does this act reveal about his character?
11. Janet explains to Jake the reasons she is drawn to politics, and also a list of reasons she would not wish to hold an elected office herself. Do you think she would be as reluctant to run for office if she were healthy? How does her illness affect her political idealism?
12. Of his mother, Gerard, and Ellory, is there one character who you think provides Jake with the best moral support? Who do you think is Jake's best advisor?
13. Why does Janet choose Jake over the governor?
14. What do you make of Amelia Rossi's elaborate Thanksgiving feast? Is this overabundance just a family tradition or do you see it as something more meaningful?
15. Why does Jake take Janet to Shanksville? What purpose does this trip serve for him, and why is it important that Janet be there?
16. Are there any silver linings to Janet's illness?
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