



It's All Right Now

By Charles Chadwick
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Introduction

Tom Ripple is a man seemingly committed to nothing except bad puns and lust. In *It's All Right Now*, Ripple reveals the story of his life from the 1970s through the present day. He begins with his quiet marriage and family life in the suburbs of north London and his steady rise in the business world (which comes to include a great deal of traveling and philandering) to a new period as a divorced churchgoing country gentleman in Suffolk, then covers his time at a modest flat in London where he becomes profoundly and strangely connected to the residents of his building, and finally his retirement in a quiet coastal town.

A provocative examination of the everyday by a remarkable new everyman, *It's All Right Now* gathers force and depth as its anti-hero, Tom Ripple, shares his candid observations on his life and the unforgettable characters he comes to know along the way.

Questions for Discussion

1. Tom's character is, at every turn, under question. For example, was it wrong of Tom not to report Webb, the neighbor who tried to molest his son, to the police? Was it the right decision not to tell his wife? Why didn't he tell his wife? Is it possible that he kept Adrian's secret because he felt guilty about his own interest in his son? (See page 58.)
2. Ripple says he's not sure how much he loves his children. Discuss your reaction to this frankness about being a father. Does this make you dislike him or feel an appreciation for his honesty? Discuss other examples of Ripple's candor that form your opinion of him.
3. Why does Tom Ripple begin writing his life story? What does he get out of it? (See page 113)
4. Discuss Tom's sense of humor and constant joke-making. Does he crack silly, grade-school jokes to ingratiate himself with people, or, in fact, to upset them? Is it a way of pushing people away and showing contempt for them? Consider what he says on page 551, "One of the ways of distracting attention from our foolishness is to play the fool, to indicate that our foolishness is something we are well aware of."
5. After his divorce, Tom puts an end to seeing prostitutes for sex, makes a home for himself in the country, and becomes an active participant in his local church. What is he searching for at this point in his life? Does he find any solace in the church or was it a failed attempt at a spiritual connection?
6. The relationship between Maureen and Tom is a wonderful example of the difficulty of actually making a connection with another person -- how we long for people, have nothing in common with them, miss them when they leave. Discuss what happened between Tom and Maureen. Was she a bit hard on him the weekend she spent at his house in Suffolk? Was it insensitive of him to bring her to the old folks home?
7. How does Tom's relationship to the world and to people change over the course of his life? Does he become more connected to his world, even as that world may look more impersonal to an outside eye? Discuss his relationships in the flat he rents after Suffolk: the young dancers, the Polish widow, Foster, the neighbor who commits suicide. Does he find some intimacy, some kind of authentic love, in his relationships with these semi-strangers?
8. When Tom's mother dies he says of the last time he saw her, "Nothing of any importance had been said, no questions asked, no summing up, as though there were enough illusions about life already without any of that." Consider Tom's unsentimental viewpoint. His reaction to his mother's death is one example. His reaction to his wife divorcing him is another example. How does his practical outlook serve him? How is it a hindrance to actually experiencing real feelings of loss and love?
9. The other side of Tom's practical nature is the way he responds to situations with sensible actions. Often he seems to use his skills as a former accountant to bring something to difficult situations. When his mother dies, he sets up accounts for the Ranasinghe children. When he cannot communicate with his daughter, he expresses affection by helping her with a check for a house. Discuss other ways Tom responds to emotional situations with practical actions.
10. Tom's daughter-in-law Jane seems to be the one person in his life that he is able to express love for in a natural, easy way. And Jane returns that love. What is it about Jane that makes Tom able to love her so freely?

About the Author

A first-time novelist at age 72, Charles Chadwick is a former civil servant who has lived and worked in London, Nigeria, Brazil, Zambia, Kenya, Canada, and Poland. He currently lives in London.