



House Rules

By Rachel Sontag
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Introduction

A memoir of a father obsessed with control and the daughter who fights his suffocating grasp, *House Rules* explores the complexities of their compelling and destructive relationship as Rachel fights to escape, and, later, to make sense of what remains of her family.

Questions for Discussion

1. What do you think motivated the author to share her life story? How did you respond to the author's "voice"?
2. What character traits—both good and bad—do you think were a byproduct of the author's unique childhood? How do you think those traits shaped the author's adult life?
3. In the introduction, the author has a conversation with a man she meets at a dinner party about her writing process, in which she is asked "Who's the monster? . . . Your Dad or Mom?" Do you think the author paints her parents as monsters? How is this question explored throughout the book?
4. The author writes *House Rules* predominantly from the point of view of an adolescent. How might the narrative and the author's perceptions change if she had told it from the point of view of an adult, with the benefit of the understanding she gained about her family and childhood as an adult? How might this change the style of the memoir?
5. How would you explain the relationship between the author and her sister? How might their different roles and experiences growing up inform their lives as adults?
6. *House Rules* is described as a memoir about the author's relationship with her father. Do you consider this to be the case, or is this actually an exploration of the author's relationship with her mother? How is that relationship more simple or complicated than that of the author and her father's?
7. Why do you think the author chose to write this memoir? What is the responsibility an author takes on in wrestling with her past and presenting it as truth?
8. Regardless of the unique nature of family dysfunction, were there any aspects of this memoir that you could identify with? What were they? If not, what most surprised or impacted you?

About the Author

Rachel Sontag was born and raised in Evanston, Illinois. She received her MFA in creative writing from the New School. She lives in New York City.