

Where They Found Her

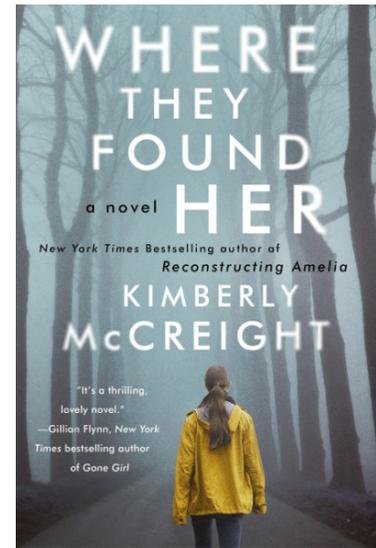
Harper Perennial

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Introduction

Motherhood hasn't been easy for Molly Anderson, and the years since the loss of her second child have been a particular struggle. But six months after moving from New York City to sophisticated Ridgedale, New Jersey, she's finally enjoying life again, as mother of a five-year-old daughter and fledgling arts reporter for the local paper. But this tenuous stability is threatened when the body of a newborn is found in the woods behind prestigious Ridgedale University and Molly is assigned the story. Over the objections of her increasingly concerned husband, Molly dives into reporting, determined to prove herself by uncovering the truth. What she finds is a decades-old trail of dark secrets that winds through every corner of the town.



Told from the perspectives of Molly; Barbara, wife of Ridgedale's police chief, whose faltering son is unraveling her picture-perfect life; and a sixteen-year old high school dropout, Sandy, who is dealing with her wayward mother, *Where They Found Her* reveals that the tragic truth about what happened to the baby lies at the unexpected intersection of these three very different women's lives. It is a taut and profoundly moving novel about mothers and daughters—the fierce bonds that unite them and the deceit that can drive them apart. But most of all it's about the heartbreakingly high price of history. The past can be artfully denied, but never truly buried.

Questions for Discussion

1. In what ways is Molly prepared, or not, to report on the tragic discovery in Ridgedale?
2. How does Molly's job as a journalist compare with her previous one as a lawyer? In what ways are the skills required the same? Different?
3. In what situations might a newspaper editor be justified in not publishing certain facts of a story? What are a paper's social responsibilities?
4. Examine the many different experiences of motherhood in the novel. What are the various challenges of each?

5. How does shifting between several narrative voices affect the novel? Why do you think an author might use this technique?
6. Consider the use of newspaper articles, readers' online comments, Molly's counseling transcripts, even phone texts in the novel. What does each bring to the story? How are these sources of information different?
7. After her initial shock, Molly comes to believe covering the story of a baby that has died will help her recover from the death of her own baby. Why does she feel this way? What's a healthy and effective way to respond to grief?
8. Erik cautions Molly that it's human nature for even good, honest people to "support...a self-serving narrative," even to the point of excluding facts. Why is this so?
9. What are some examples of lying in the novel? Are they all equal? When is lying justified?
10. Steve, Ridgedale's Chief of Police, has a very complicated position in the case. What different forces and loyalties are at work within him as he investigates?
11. How has the technological ability for readers to offer immediate online comments about articles changed the nature and effect of reading the news?
12. Barbara says that her husband Steve and daughter Hannah have "compassion [as] their strength" but suggests "all this caring for strangers came at a cost." What might she mean? What is a healthy amount of compassion?
13. Molly wrestles with the idea that "not everything about where you're headed...has to be about where you've been." To what extent does a person's past influence or define his or her future?
14. Both Molly and Sandy have had very troubled mothers. What are the emotional or behavioral results of this poor parenting? What does it take to overcome such a start in life and become healthy and happy?
15. Sandy shows incredible strength throughout the novel. What qualities does she possess? Did her strengths develop *because of* or *despite* her difficult childhood?

16. In a discussion about Cole, Barbara yells at Rhea that she cannot understand the situation because she does not have children. To what extent is this true?