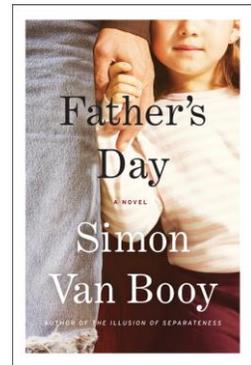


Father's Day

Harper

By Simon Van Booy

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Questions for Discussion

1. Early in the novel, Jason is said to have been “born with bad in [him].” What might this mean? What else might explain Jason’s anger and violence?
2. Despite his crimes, what good qualities has Jason demonstrated throughout his life? How might these have remained in him even through his difficult experience? How might you explain such resilience?
3. During the abusive time with his father, Jason “had no safe place—only safe things, like his flick-knife, the toys he stole for Steve, and the wax that allowed him to style his hair.” How can such ordinary objects provide a feeling of safety or be important?
4. How does losing both of her parents affect Harvey? What personal qualities does she possess that seem to help her with such a tragedy?
5. What makes Wanda from Social Services good at her job? What do her instincts tell her makes a good parent? Why, in particular, does she think Jason would make a good parent?
6. In what ways does Jason turn out to be a good parent or not?
7. On several occasions Wanda circumvents or even breaks the official rules of her government position in a way that she believes necessary to do what’s right. Why is this necessary? What determines if she is right to do so?
8. When thinking of his own father, Jason suggests that happiness might simply be to feel “safe and that somebody cared.” What does this say about Jason’s experience? What else might be necessary for happiness? What else does he provide for Harvey?
9. When visiting Harvey in France, Jason admits to loving only three people, but says that’s “a good number.” Is it? Why or why not? How many people might someone genuinely be able to love?
10. At one point in the challenging experience of raising Harvey, “Jason realized that it was also the little things, like pizza night, playing the drums, and watching cartoons, that made life worth living.” To what extent is this true? In what ways might larger goals or experiences be necessary or valuable?

11. What do we learn about Harvey from how she interacts with her dolls and stuffed animals? What's the role of fantasy in a child's life?
12. What's the importance of the motorcycle that Jason works on over the years? Why is Harvey so angry when he finally sells it?
13. Harvey is responsible for forging the unlikely friendship between Jason and Vincent. What motivated her? What did she learn that made it possible? How do apology and forgiveness actually work?
14. When visiting Harvey in France, Jason observes that kids of her generation seem to "fight with themselves more than with other kids." What might he mean? What might explain this turn inward?
15. What role does Harvey's drawing and art play in her life? What about her can be learned from her final thesis: "a full-length comic about an outlaw motorcycle gang whose members all had disabilities"?
16. What's significant about the fact that Harvey lives and works in France? What does it add to the novel?
17. When confronted with Harvey's adoption paperwork Jason says truth is "not what's written on a piece of paper or in blood too small to see—but the memory of how it felt being together." In what ways is this true or not?