

Readers Group Guide

Unbound, by Steph Jagger

Discussion Questions

1. Jagger admits to wanting to be “rugged...man enough...good enough.” What does she mean by this? What has influenced her to have such goals?
2. Jagger describes how a “small amount of boredom” had crept into her life, and how she was feeling a sense of dissatisfaction before embarking on her trip. Do you think that's a compelling enough reason to up and change one's life? Why or why not? How do gender stereotypes play a role in this, if at all?
3. A simple metal sign near a ski chairlift reading “Raise Restraining Device” jolted Jagger into her trip. When are seemingly random signs (literal or figurative) to be trusted as guidance in life? What signs have you followed or not followed?
4. Looking back, Jagger realizes that “becoming one's best and being one's bravest involves cracking open...shattering.” What might this mean? How did it occur for her?
5. In what ways is Jagger's “lifetime pursuit of blue ribbons” healthy or not?
6. Jagger explores her identity and transformation with the help of *The Roar of Awakening* and the description of tigers and goats. How is this helpful to her?
7. In what ways is Jagger similar to or different from the rest of her family?
8. Jagger's mother, for whom “worry is [a] signature emotion,” strongly influenced her idea of “what it meant to be a woman.” What *did* it mean to her? And in what ways did Jagger's identity as a woman become more complex?
9. Joseph introduced Jagger to the valuable and subtle concept of “shibumi.” What is it? Why is it important? In what ways does she achieve it?
10. In Argentina, Jagger meets Pete, “a gift from the Gods.” Why is he so important to her?
11. Jagger's first interactions with Chris are compelling but complex, even making her “nervous” around him. What's he like when they first meet? What is revealed as they spend more time together?
12. Despite being very attracted to Chris, Jagger claims that “blue ribbons were far more important than boys.” What are her priorities at this point in her life? In what ways is this consistent with or contrary to American cultural norms for women?
13. Well into her trip, Jagger acknowledges that she had “shoved [her] femininity to the side.” Why did this seem necessary to her? What conflicts did this eventually cause?
14. By the time Jagger arrived in New Zealand, “manning up” began to feel “awful” to her. Why?
15. Jagger develops a complex definition of resilience that goes well beyond mere willpower. What is it? How might a person want or not want to apply this definition to their own life?
16. What does Jagger mean when she says, in various ways, that “the universe” is in charge?

17. Jagger struggled with a strong amount of shame regarding her femininity. Why? What are other culturally shaming forces women must contend with? What does it take to change or transcend such burdensome feelings?
18. How does Chris become more and more important to Jagger as the trip progresses?
19. Jagger finds an interesting link between the experience of waiting, of having patience, and suffering. How are they related? What might be a healthy amount of suffering?
20. Late in her trip, Jagger has important visions of her grandfather. What do they provide for her?
21. Jagger realizes that her “definition of home had to change.” What does she mean? How is home defined beyond mere geographical location?
22. How might mountains “tell you who you are...reflect you back like a mirror”? What in your life does that for you, or could do that for you?
23. What did Jagger have to let go of in order to find her happiness? How does one decide what ideas, feelings, and beliefs to keep or let go of? And what does it take to let go?
24. What do you consider to be “rites of passage” in life? Which ones are most important? Why have we lost many of them?
25. What are the most important lessons Jagger learned? What type of transformations did she realize throughout her journey?