

Finding Jake

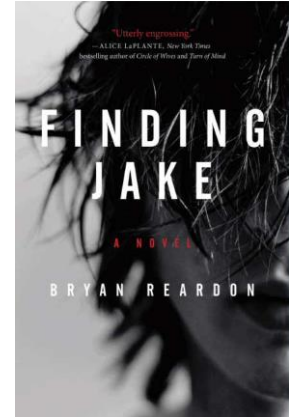
William Morrow

By Bryan Reardon

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Introduction

A heart-wrenching yet ultimately uplifting story of psychological suspense in which a parent is forced to confront what he does—and does not—know about his teenage son, in the vein of *Reconstructing Amelia*, *Defending Jacob*, and *We Need to Talk about Kevin*.



Questions for Discussion

1. Who is Jake Connolly? Does Simon have a good understanding of his son's personality?
2. Most parents assume they know their children well. How true is that assumption? Should parents know everything about their children? Where is the line between privacy and parenting?
3. Are Simon and Jake introverts? Is introvert a *bad* word? Could Simon have done more to teach Jake to be social?
4. As more fathers stay at home with their children, has it become a socially acceptable family paradigm? How do you think stay-at-home dads are really seen in our society? How do you think stay-at-home dads view their decision to buck social norms? Would you want Simon at a play-date?
5. Why does Simon struggle to fit in with the other stay-at-home parents? Is it his own insecurities, or their discomfort? What could Simon have done to be more approachable and social?
6. Is *Finding Jake* about a school shooting or about the more mundane challenges of modern parenting? How have parenting methods changed from past generations? How might changing parenting methods influence society? Can parents prevent tragedy?
7. Does the media's response to the shooting and to Jake and Doug ring true today? Do you find yourself delving into the lives of those struck by tragedy? Or those responsible for it?
8. Simon experiences a moment of parental pride when he tells Jake he should always be nice to people, even if others are not. Did that advice contribute to the shooting? Should Simon have gone back to that advice and felt responsible? Or was that just one of a myriad of mistakes he thought he made? Can a parent's influence of a child ever truly be predicted?

9. Do Simon and Rachel still love one another? What factors influence the change in their relationship? Can they survive together? In what ways can raising children challenge a marriage/relationship?
10. Could events have been changed if Jake talked openly with his father about his life and school? Do any children tell their parents *everything*? Does a parent really want to know everything? Where is the line between protecting your child and letting him/her grow up?
11. Did the ending surprise you? What, if any, aspects of the story led you to believe it would end differently? What other ways could the story have ended?
12. Which character did you like or relate to the most? Which the least? Do you have to love a character to enjoy a book?
13. How responsible is a parent for their children's actions? In a tragic situation such as this, is it fair to blame parents for not seeing what was coming?
14. There are certainly challenges that face stay at home dads, and the perspective here is from Simon's viewpoint, but how do you imagine that scenario affects the mothers who work? Is there guilt or resentment on the mother's part that she is not home with her children? Is there too much pressure to be the primary income earner? Does she lose her maternal instincts or feel that she has been denied a natural role? What price do these families pay to break the norm?