

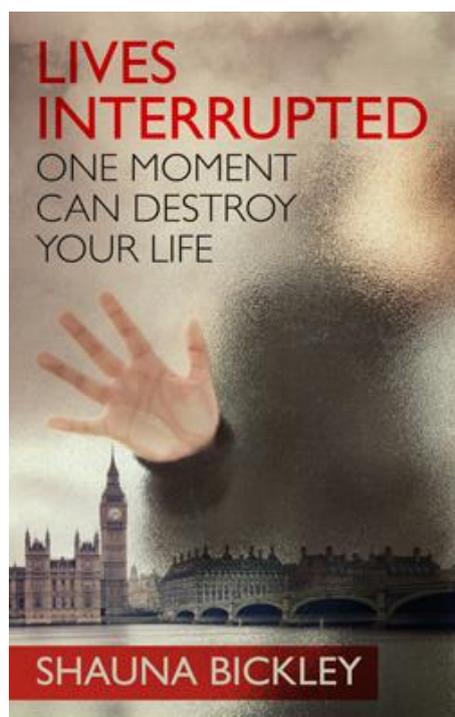
Lives Interrupted – Reading Club Notes

Spoiler Alert

Please note these questions and notes **DO** contain spoilers.

It is recommended you don't read these notes until you have read the book as it will spoil the gradual unfolding of the plot.

Summary



Lives Interrupted is the story of ordinary people involved in an extraordinary situation when bombs explode on the London underground.

Their lives feel anything but ordinary before the explosions - dealing with redundancy, financial problems, relationship difficulties, new places and people. In the aftermath of the bombings, they are propelled into lives and situations they don't want and for which they aren't prepared.

Their choices and actions aren't necessarily good, and sometimes show the less pleasant side of their characters. Ultimately, they are people trying to make sense of the senseless.

The storylines weave together and while the explosions have a huge influence, their own decisions also impact each other.

Lives Interrupted is about the strength, or otherwise, of friendship and relationships among the fragile every day of life.

Discussion Points

1. There is a short introduction to the novel.

One moment can change your life. One moment that takes everything. That leaves nothing as it was.

People you will never know. Their decisions take what was, and leave you with now.

This obviously applies to the underground bombings, but are there other situations in this novel for which this could also apply?

2. When Dru starts going out with Kate, Rob tells him about the incident when Kate saved his life. Towards the end of the novel, Dru tells Kate about his sister's death, for which he obviously feels responsible. What impact do you think these incidents had on Dru and Kate's characters, and ultimately, did it influence their relationship?
3. One of the main themes of the novel is the strength of the female friendships (Rosa and Ellie, and Kate and Francine), and how they help each other cope. Do these relationships also cause negative impacts or consequences?
4. When Ellie tells Rosa about her son and that he lives in a residential home, she says it's something else that people judge. What do you think of her decision?

Ellie then tells Rosa how she pays for the residential care. If a close friend told you this, what do you think your reaction would be?

5. Did Matthew's redundancy play a part in his affair with Vicki? Is it justification for the affair? Is there anything else Rosa could have done to help Matthew?
6. After a series of financial setbacks, Rosa decides that working for the escort agency is her *only option*. Is this so? What else could she have done?
7. Given the decision Rosa made about working for the agency, do you think she was justified in leaving Matthew?
If the car accident hadn't resulted in the fatalities, do you think she would have made the same decision?
8. Fitz breaking up with Francine is a catalyst for some uncharacteristic behaviour from Kate. What do you believe is the underlying reason for her being so upset over the breakup? Do you think she seriously considered suicide?
9. The following is part of a conversation shortly after Fitz has broken up with Francine.
Anna (physiotherapist) – 'You will get stronger, and you will walk out of this hospital.'
Francine – 'People will always see me as different.'
Anna - But you're still the same person inside. People who know you will realise that.'
Francine – 'Only if they stay.'
Is this a realistic point of view?
10. When Rob finds out about Ellie's other job, he says he doesn't want to see her again. After some consideration and a conversation with Kate he changes his mind. What do you think of his decisions? Could or would you do the same in similar circumstances?
11. Towards the end, Kate makes a decision about her relationship with Dru. Would you have preferred a different outcome? Do you see any opportunity in the future that it might change?
12. At the end of the novel, Rosa is left with a decision to make. What do you think she should do?

Author Details

Shauna Bickley works as a technical writer, and also develops workshops and training courses for corporate organisations.

She writes short stories and novels. Her short stories have been published in magazines, and *Recipe for a Dinner Party* was selected for the Awesome Indies anthology, *Awesome Allshorts: Last Days, Lost Ways*.

Her novels include:

Still Death – mystery/thriller

Lies of the Dead - mystery/thriller

Lives Interrupted - contemporary women's fiction

Driftwood - romantic suspense

Shauna was born in England and has lived in various countries around the world as her husband was in the military. She now calls Auckland home.

Interview Q&A

Q. What is the greatest joy of writing for you?

A. When someone writes or tells me how much they enjoyed one of my books, how they were drawn to the characters and the emotion of the story, or that they couldn't turn the pages fast enough but didn't want to miss a word. That's magic!

I love losing myself in a wonderful story and I've always wanted to be able to create that for other people. It means so much to me when someone tells me I've succeeded.

Q. Who are your favorite authors?

A. That is such a difficult question to answer.

I try to read widely and look at different styles as well as different genres. Since I've been writing seriously I've found that I read differently and am constantly looking at why something works (or doesn't).

I enjoy mystery/suspense novels, but also writing that makes me laugh. I'm in awe of writers who make me laugh out loud.

Q. When you're not writing, how do you spend your time?

A. As I live close to the beach that plays quite a big part in my spare time. I find walking a great way to inspire ideas for scenes in current and future projects.

I guess I'm not that much different to many other people in that meeting friends (especially in cafes and restaurants) is a favourite way to spend time, and when work and cash allows then travel is on the list.

Q. What is your writing process?

People talk about being a planner or a pantser (writing by the seat of your pants not knowing where the story is going). I tend to think of it as more of a continuum rather than being one or the other.

My books tend to be character rather than plot driven, and usually start in a similar way. A character comes to mind and over a period of weeks or months they take shape as I find out more about them and their situation. At some point I start to plan in general terms, usually a paragraph or so of the main plot points for the first half of the novel. I also note down any particular background, habits or quirks for the main characters that I feel are important.

By that time, I'm eager to start writing. I've usually worked out my opening scenes and so those first few thousand words come quickly. Once I reach the half-way point (up to where I've plotted) I usually know the main points for the rest, and finish sketching out my plan, together with any changes that have happened on the way.