

THOSE WHO ARE GONE

LAURIE R KING

Reading Group Guide



1. Secrets are central to *Those Who Are Gone*: secrets kept, or revealed, or not even suspected. Are some secrets better aired than allowed to stay hidden? If anyone has ever let your secret out, did you find it hard to forgive them?
2. What, to you, is “family”? Is it mostly blood relation, or is it the emotional bond formed over time and over shared interests and hardships?
3. Have you ever sent in your DNA to an ancestry site? If so, what did you learn?
4. How do you think people get over—or perhaps, get past—having a loved one go missing, forever? How different would it be to having a loved one murdered, but no arrest made?
5. Have you ever been to San Francisco? Did you feel its presence strongly in the book, or could the story have been set in any number of cities?
6. Trauma is a universal experience, and various characters in the book process theirs differently. Compare how their problematic childhoods shaped them.
7. Raquel finds cooking a pleasurable mix of science and art, while Dee suggests that it is either displaced emotion or a fantasy re-creation of happier times. Do you like it when authors use an everyday activity to explore the characters and their relationships?
8. Had you met the idea of *desaparecidos* before—the men and women ‘disappeared’ by governments or drug cartels? Does it trouble you when an author brings in something that is by its nature hugely disturbing, but doesn’t place it at the center of the story?
9. Dee Laing is “one of the best security professionals on the planet”—a woman with potentially scary computer skills, who does a lot of work with investigative groups such as Bellingcat. Have you ever come across the term OSINT, for open-source intelligence gathering? Do you think amateur online investigations have a place in law enforcement?
10. Jen Bachus is a cheerful, outdoorsy extrovert, while Raquel is...not. Can you see their relationship lasting?