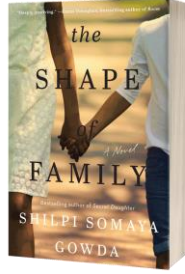


THE SHAPE OF FAMILY Discussion Guide



1. The book is told in chronological order, with the exception of the first chapter. Why do you think this flash-forward was included here? How does it set the scene for what's to come?
2. Prem blames his death as the cause for his family's separation, but Karina remembers her parents fighting even before that. What do you think would have happened to the family if Prem had survived—would it have stayed more tightly knit, or were their separate paths inevitable?
3. Jaya seeks peace through spirituality, while Keith looks for it in his work. How much do you think these different approaches have to do with their different backgrounds and what each of their cultures values? What do Karina's choices represent in relation to her parents' paths?
4. What did you think about the chapters told from Prem's point of view? Did his perspective make you see any of the characters or the family unit differently?
5. After her parents' divorce, Karina thinks of herself as the "bridge" keeping them connected, much as Prem thought of himself as the family's "glue." Where do you think these beliefs come from—their parents, or themselves?
6. Why does Karina take so quickly to the Sanctuary? What does she see in it and its residents that is missing from her own life?
7. The SEC investigation leads Keith to worry that his decisions have resulted in "upending the man he believed himself to be." Why does this bother him so much? How do each of the Olanders struggle with trying to be the person they believe themselves to be?
8. What significance does Karina's name hold for her? What did you think of her changing it to Serotina, and was this a more fitting name for her?
9. While Karina and Jaya both turn to new makeshift families in the wake of their grief, Keith avoids serious romantic relationships in favor of casual flings. Why do you think his response is different in this way?

10. Part of Karina's shift in understanding what's happening at the Sanctuary comes from seeing the callous treatment of animals—Buddy the horse and the neighbor's dog. Why do you think she feels so strongly about this? Does she see something of herself in them, or Prem?

11. Why do you think the author chose the names she did for the four section headings—Home, Away, Sanctuary, and Found?