

DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR CITY MOUSE

1. Have you ever found yourself in a situation like Jessica with a new group of friends who have a different set of values than yours? Did you extract yourself, like Jessica, or try to find common ground?
2. Should Jessica have told her husband that her new friends cheated on their spouses? Is there any truth to the motto “what happens in Vegas (or somewhere else) stays in Vegas (or somewhere else)?” Discuss situations where you think the bonds of friendship are more important than the bond of marriage.
3. Discuss how peer pressure comes into play in the book. How are things different for these women versus what it was like when you were in middle or high school?
4. Have you ever been in a situation—similar to Jessica’s walk on the beach in Kiawah—where a quick decision to act, a turned cheek for a kiss, or a sigh, could change your life, or your marriage, forever?
5. Where did you think Jessica and Aaron would end up, and why? If this had been the opposite situation—a woman from the suburbs is forced to move into the city—what do you think would have happened differently?
6. To what extent do you think Jessica’s rejection of her jean party friends is classist? Is her rejection of these women an indictment of the suburban stay-at-home mom?
7. At one point Tami says, “sex is like exercise.” Do you agree? Do you think Tami is a feminist? What do you think makes this story of moms/wives cheating more intriguing than a story about dads/husbands cheating?
8. If your sitter/nanny got into a car accident with your children in the car, would you ask her to contribute to the repairs? Would you give her a second chance, or would you fire her?
9. Jessica equates Carolann’s admission that she cannot articulate her own interests to her being stuck at home, spending her days fulfilling everyone else’s needs. Do you think stay-at-home moms are more likely than working moms to seek out risky experiences to create excitement in their lives? Discuss how much has changed (or hasn’t) in the 50+ years since Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* revealed uncomfortable truths about women, work, and the suburban lifestyle.
10. Discuss the pros and cons of raising a family in the city vs. in the suburbs. What advice would you give a friend who is considering a move?
11. Discuss the imagery of objects that turn out not to be as perfect as they first seem (Jessica’s brand new house, Alyson’s manicured greenery, Jessica’s express train to work, etc.). How does the life you’re living now in your community compare to what you thought it would be like when you first moved there?
12. Do you think Tami and Alyson will ever reconcile?
13. How much of a part does luck play into finding true friends? If Jessica had moved in next to Michelle instead of Alyson, do you think the ending would be different?

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