



READING GUIDE

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The Names

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In short

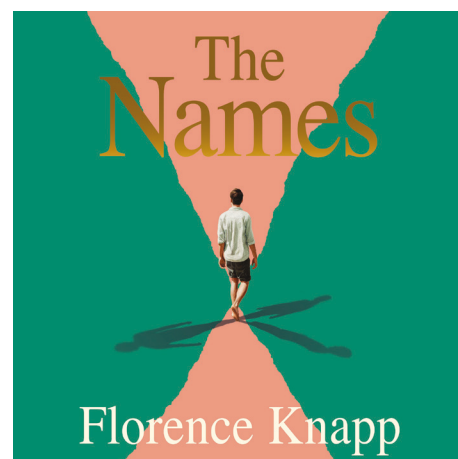
The story of three names, three versions of a life, and the infinite possibilities that a single decision can spark.

Synopsis

It is 1987, and in the aftermath of a great storm, Cora sets out with her nine-year-old daughter to register the birth of her son. Her husband intends for her to follow a long-standing family tradition and call the baby after him. But when faced with the decision, Cora hesitates. Going against his wishes is a risk that will have consequences, but is it right for her child to inherit his name from generations of domineering men? The choice she makes in this moment will shape the course of their lives.

Seven years later, her son is Bear, a name chosen by his sister, and one that will prove as cataclysmic as the storm from which it emerged. Or he is Julian, the name his mother set her heart on, believing it will enable him to become his own person. Or he is Gordon, named after his father and raised in his cruel image - but is there still a chance to break the mould?

Powerfully moving and full of hope, this is the story of three names, three versions of a life, and the infinite possibilities that a single decision can spark. It is the story of one family, and love's endless capacity to endure, no matter what fate has in store.



Discussion points

1. What did you think of the book being divided into three lives of Gordon, Julian and Bear? How did it affect your reading experience?
2. Have you read another book with a 'sliding doors' narrative? If so, how was *The Names* similar or different to it/them?

3. How do Gordon, Julian and Bear grow and change because of the events of the novel?
Did your opinion of them change as the book progressed?
4. What did you think of the ending? Did it surprise you? Do you feel everything was resolved?

Next you should listen to

Vianne by Joanne Harris

The Wedding People by Alison Espach

Shy Creatures by Clare Chambers