

Must Love Flowers Discussion Guide

1. What are the themes of *Must Love Flowers*? How would you describe this novel to a friend?

2. Joan relies on routines each day. In what ways are routines helpful, as well as harmful? What are the benefits of breaking a routine?

3. Joan with her husband. Maggie with her mother. How do these women process their grief differently? Which character resonated with you most, and why?

4. The pandemic hit soon after Joan's husband Jared passed, adding to the isolation Joan was experiencing. She holed up inside her home like the rest of the world, and continued to stay holed up once things opened again. Did you find the pandemic to be isolating as well? How did it feel once the world began "opening up" again? Did your relationships, and the direction of your life change?

5. How would you describe yourself in the gardening department? If you garden, what's your favorite part of it? If not, why?

6. Maggie's relationship with her father is fraught. How much do we owe family? What should the boundaries be and when does one cross the line? Discuss the tensions between being supportive and being independent.

7. What is your favorite kind of flower and why? Joan "adored the calla lilies that sprang up each spring. . . . the scene of fields of blooming tulips had taken her breath away." If a certain flower brings up a particular memory, please share.

8. How did Joan and Maggie each help the other?

9. Joan takes a major step forward when she attends a grief therapy group. How does engagement with others help relieve suffering? What is the difference between loneliness and being alone?

10. On their first date, Maggie and Joan's son, Nick, attend a trivia night. How would you describe your trivia skills? Pretend you're on Team Beer Today, Gone Tomorrow: What was the title of Bruce Springsteen's memoir? Where was Catherine the Great born?

11. How do you think Joan handled her relationship with her son, Steve?

12. Which scenes stood out to you, and why?

13. At the end of the novel, Phil tells Joan that his heart knew from the moment she said her landscaper must love flowers. "I had no idea if you were young or old, married or single, and yet I knew I was going to fall in love with you." When do you think Joan started to fall in love with Phil?

14. If you could ask the Debbie Macomber anything, what would it be?

15. If the book were being made into a movie and TV series, who would you cast in the roles?