

## **Book Club Questions for Little Monsters by Adrienne Brodeur**

1. Let's start with the captivating setting of Cape Cod, described as both an Edenic paradise and a fragile ecosystem. How does the author's vivid portrayal of the landscape and seascape add depth to the story and the characters' experiences?
2. The novel is anchored by the enigmatic and irascible marine biologist, Adam Gardner. How does Adam's character shape the dynamics within the family, especially with his son, Ken, and daughter, Abby? Discuss the effects of his actions and choices on their lives and relationships.
3. Both Jenny and Steph are intertwined with the Gardner family, but their paths are divergent. Jenny is deeply enmeshed as Abby's best friend and Ken's wife, while Steph is just discovering her connections to this complicated family. Compare and contrast their arcs as they navigate their place within the Gardner clan, reevaluating their roles and relationships.
4. Gender dynamics play a significant role in "Little Monsters," resulting in conflicts within the Gardner family. Reflect on moments when these differences lead to tension. Whose perspective did you align with during those moments? Did you find the character with whom you disagreed sympathetic in any way? Examine how gender perceptions influence their actions and relationships.
5. Mental health, especially that of the male characters, is a key element of their characterization. How do Ken's therapy sessions and Adam's bipolar disorder influence their actions and relationships within the family?
6. Reflect on the title "Little Monsters" and Abby's painting titled "Little Monster." Why do you think the author chose these specific titles? How do they relate to the novel's themes and characters?
7. The novel explores the theme of female alliances, highlighting the rising influence of a matriarchy within the family. Discuss the women in the story, such as Abby and Steph, and how they navigate the challenges posed by the patriarchal force represented by Adam. How do they find strength and support in one another?
8. One of the central themes in "Little Monsters" is the question of understanding and communication between humans and nature. How does the author use Adam's obsession with decoding humpback whale sounds as a metaphor for the limitations of human knowledge? How does this theme resonate throughout the novel?
9. Abby and Ken each plan elaborate gifts for their father's seventieth birthday, jostling for his attention and approval. How do their gifts symbolize their desires, fears, and longing for validation from their father? What do you think the act of gift-giving represents in this family dynamic?

10. "Little Monsters" is a story of complex family relationships and the secrets that bind them together. Which character's perspective did you find most compelling, and why? How did their individual narratives contribute to your understanding of the family's history and dynamics?
11. The novel is set in the fraught summer of 2016, drawing on the biblical tale of Cain and Abel. How do you see the parallels between the biblical story and the characters' relationships in "Little Monsters"? How does this biblical reference enrich your interpretation of the novel?
12. Family secrets play a pivotal role in "Little Monsters." What are some of the secrets that surface throughout the novel, and how do they impact the characters' lives and interactions? How do these secrets mirror the complexities of real-life family dynamics?
13. As the story unfolds, the characters' flaws and vulnerabilities are gradually revealed. How does the author's slow unveiling of these complexities add depth and authenticity to the narrative? Which character's growth and development stood out to you the most?
14. Memories from Ken and Abby's childhood shape their present-day relationship. Can you identify specific sentences or passages that hint at their complex dynamic in the early parts of the novel? How does their past affect their interactions now, and what impact does it have on other characters in their lives?
15. Reflecting on the book's themes of forgiveness, love, and the intricacies of family, how does "Little Monsters" resonate with your own experiences and relationships? Did the novel prompt you to revisit your own perceptions of family dynamics and personal choices?