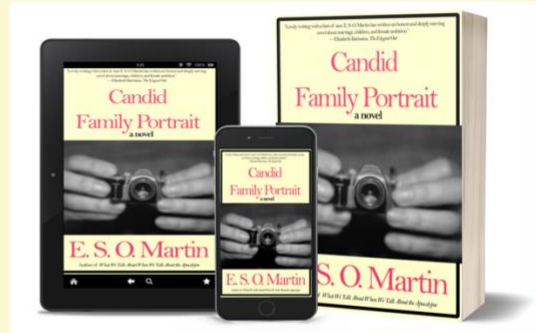


Candid Family Portrait

a novel

E. S. O. Martin



Book Club Discussion Questions

1. *Candid Family Portrait* is told through alternating points-of-view between June and Vince. How did the alternating points of view affect the experience of the story in ways that might've been different if the story was only told through the eyes of one character? Did you sympathize with the characters? Which ones, and why?
2. The story begins with a positive pregnancy test and the characters' anxiety about how having a baby will change their marriage, their careers, and their lives. Did you feel that this central problem was relatable? How do June and Vince anticipate a change in their lives before their baby arrives? How does their life actually change once the baby has arrived? How do they feel about these changes?
3. What do "motherhood" and "femininity" mean to June? How does June view her work? How does she view the home? What does June want from her life? What is standing in her way? What strategies does she pursue to overcome these blocks? Is she successful? Does her definition of "success" change or stay the same by the end of the story?
4. What do "fatherhood" and "masculinity" mean to Vince? How does Vince view his work? How does he view the home? What does Vince want from his life? What is standing in his way? What strategies does he employ to overcome this block? Is he successful? Does his definition of "success" change or stay the same by the end of the story?
5. How do June and Vince experience a shift in status with the external world after becoming parents? How do June and Vince experience a shift in status within their internal, domestic world after becoming parents?
6. How do Vince and June view their marriage (and their place within it) at the beginning? In the middle? And at the end?
7. How do June and Vince view their parents' marriages? How does this impact their attitudes toward their own marriage, family, and work?

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8. June and Vince both view their bosses as mentors, at different times in the story. Are their bosses good mentors? If so, how? If not, why not? How are June and Vince viewed by their bosses, co-workers, and peers?
9. Are there any solutions you can think of to solve this conflict between work and family?
10. Is there a love triangle in this story? If so, with whom or with what? If not, why not?
11. Were there particular passages that sparked your senses? Are there any quotes, passages, or scenes you found particularly compelling? Why did this stand out to you? What parts of the book were unique, out of place, thought-provoking, or disturbing?
12. How is the fairy tale of the selkie used in relation to motherhood? How does the metaphor of “the selkie” change in the book?
13. The Wikipedia definition of alloparenting is “*a term used to classify any form of parental care provided by an individual towards a non-descendant young. Non-descendant refers to any young who is not the direct genetic offspring of the individual, but does not exclude related young such as siblings or grandchildren. Individuals providing this care are referred to using the neutral term of alloparent (or 'helper').*” What are the benefits and drawbacks of alloparenting as a child-rearing strategy?
14. What are the benefits and drawbacks of traditional parenting roles? What are the benefits and drawbacks of reverse-traditional parenting roles? What are the benefits and drawbacks of two-career families? Are there alternate family structures you have seen that were successful?
15. Where and during what time is the story set? How might this story play out differently during a different time or in a different place? How would this story have played out differently if the characters were higher or lower on the socio-economic ladder? Or if they were a different ethnicity?
16. Did the ending offer a sense of resolution to the central problem? If so, why? If not, why not?
17. What new perspective do you have as a result of reading *Candid Family Portrait*? Was it prescriptive, cautionary, or merely self-reflective on the human condition during a certain time and place in history? Is there an argument made in this book? If so, do you agree or disagree?
18. What do you imagine about the character’s lives, three months, three years, and three decades from when the story ends, as a result of the choices made in this story?
19. If you could meet one of the characters from the book, who would it be, and what would you say to them?
20. If you were to recommend this book to a friend, what would you say?