

RUN YOU DOWN discussion questions

1. How does structure of the novel, alternating between Aviva and Rebekah's perspectives, affect your understanding of the story? How does it inform Aviva and Rebekah's relationship with each other? Do you feel more sympathetic with or drawn to one of their points of view over the other?
2. The novel deals with various communities, both social and familial, and those who are excluded from these communities. In what ways does the novel praise the individuality of those marginalized from certain groups? In what ways does it portray the negative effects of exclusion?
3. Throughout the novel, Rebekah struggles in her attempt to negotiate her multiple identities. What are some of these identities and how are they in conflict with one another? In chapter six, she asks herself "what do I think of what I am doing?" (71). Does she resolve this question by the end of the novel?
4. Rebekah is constantly observing and taking note of the people around her. But it isn't until the end of the novel that she confesses "with no pressure to call new information in to the city desk every couple hours, I actually got time to absorb what people are saying - not just listen for good quotes" (266). How has Rebekah's experience changed the way she interacts with people? Does her new relationship with Aviva have anything to do with this? Or her job as a reporter?
5. What is the connection between communication and relationships in the novel? How do the different forms of communication in Aviva and Rebekah's parallel storylines contribute to their respective character development?
6. Social media has a big presence in this novel; how does it function? Does it act as a way to create communities (for example, the hashtag campaign following "The Playground Shooting" - #ithoughttheywerejoking) or as another way in which people are marginalized from communities? Does the author use social media in a believable way?
7. Many of the characters in the novel have a complicated relationship with religion; yet it also acts as a common thread that weaves the different characters and plot lines together. How does religion function in this book? Were you able to relate to any of the characters' feelings about religion? If so, which character and why?
8. What is the nature of the victims in the novel? Are they all innocent victims, or are there some who are instead casualties of their own circumstances, or caught up in situations they could or should have avoided?
9. Towards the end of the novel, Ryan reveals that this father believed "loyalty - like, no matter what - was the most important thing" (276). Yet throughout the book, loyalty is broken on a social, communal, and familial level. For whom is loyalty most important? Are Aviva and Rebekah loyal to each other?
10. What role does death play in this novel? Why do you think the author chose to end the novel with such a violent scene? Was it shocking, or do you think it was a natural escalation of the novel's events?
11. Which is the most important or the most dominant characteristic of the novel, its suspense? Its social commentary? Its depiction of family drama? Which of these aspects of the book was the most successful? Which was your favorite?