

# House Lessons

## Book Club Discussion Questions

1. House Lessons offers insights into the psychology of architecture and the connections we form with our homes. Do you have a favorite place in your home? Is there a specific architectural feature (reading nook, bay window, communal space, etc.) that helps create that feeling?
2. Early on, the author describes the first time she viewed the Pacific Northwest as “finding a geographical soul mate” (page 15). What are the characteristics of the place where you live that you connect with most? Or what other regions speak to you, and why?
3. Upon her return to Seattle from two years in Italy, the author realizes that the way her family lived there was very different. What aspects does she try to re-create? Was she successful in the end? And what would you do with your Sunday if you knew all the stores were closed (and the internet was down)?
4. At a certain point, the author’s relationship with her husband “began to look eerily like my parents’ marriage” (page 44), and the house renovations become a catalyst for change. What were the effects of this role reversal?
5. In the “Trash” chapter, the author writes: “The problem with imagination is that while we like to think of it like a boat, sailing free across an infinite ocean, the reality is that it will always be moored to the dock of what we already know.” Do you agree or disagree?
6. In the “Kitchen” chapter, the author discusses the impact of technologies and architecture on the role of women in the home and in society. In what ways do the structures of our homes and buildings help or hinder us still?
7. In reference to our parents, the author notes that “they are the house we are born into . . . we will always be renovations, never a clean slate. The trick, as with any renovation, is keeping the good bones” (page 161). What “good bones” did you keep from your parents? What parts did you intentionally try to “renovate”?
8. The author and her husband have very different approaches to the house, their relationship, parenting, and life in general. What does each bring to the table? What does the author learn from her husband and vice versa?
9. On page 176, there is a major reversal. How did this moment feel?

10. In the “Empty Nest” chapter, the author talks about the “quantum events” in her life— falling in love with her husband and with a house. What would you say are the quantum events in your own life?

11. In the beginning of the book, the author and her family clean out 7.5 tons of trash from the house. At the end, the author must sort through her own possessions before moving. What are the lessons those experiences taught her? What are five possessions you would keep if you were moving? What are three you should probably get rid of?

12. On page 210, the author talks about the power of architecture to shape us in different ways, to bring out our best qualities. Can you think of any ways you’d like to use architecture to send “messages from us to our future selves”?