

"Abbi Waxman is both irreverent and thoughtful."
— #1 *NEW YORK TIMES* bestselling author EMILY GIFFIN

a novel

the Borkish

Life of

Nina Hill


Abbi Waxman

Author of *The Garden of Small Beginnings*

Book Club Kit

Discussion Questions!

1. At the outset of the novel Nina appears very happy, although she really prefers to be alone. How does that change by the end of the novel? What role does solitude play in your life?
2. Nina loves books and is a self-proclaimed introvert. What does she find so appealing about reading? Do you think both extroverts and introverts can be passionate about reading books? How do you think the experience is similar and different for both personality types? Why do you enjoy reading?
3. Pages from Nina's planner were included in the book. Do you feel that added to the narrative? How did Nina's planner pages reflect her state of mind? Do you find planning and organizing helps you feel more in control?
4. Nina's mind is constantly moving, filling with ideas, facts, and information. How does this help and hinder Nina? What do you think are the pros and cons of having such an active brain?
5. Nina has found a group of friends who share her love of books, trivia, and popular culture. At the opening of the novel these people are her chosen family. What interests are you passionate about? Do you have a chosen family of like-minded people, or are your friends drawn from a wider pool?

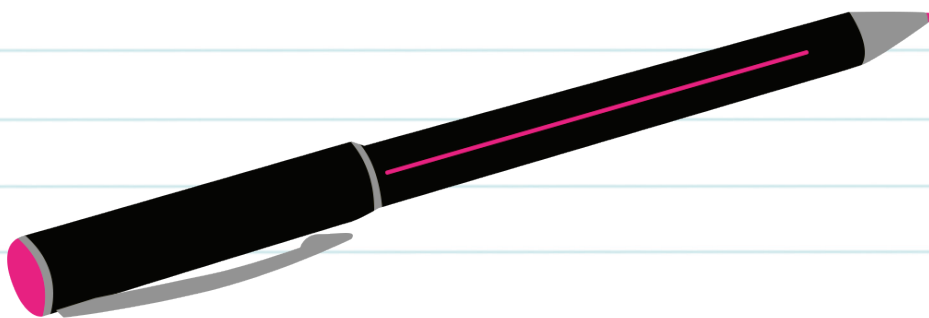
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6. Nina was raised by her nanny, Louise, a woman who wasn't her biological parent, but who loved and cared for her very deeply. Does Nina consider Lou family? What part do you think biology plays in the formation of family?
 7. After discovering her father, Nina realizes his personality resembles hers in many ways, something she feels conflicted about. What traits does Nina share with her father? What does she like about sharing certain personality characteristics with him? What does she find difficult about it? What attributes or flaws do you share with your parents, and how does that make you feel about yourself and about them?
 8. Do you think Nina will be permanently changed by discovering her family, or will she remain essentially the same?
 9. Nina struggles badly with anxiety, which is often quite debilitating. What are her coping mechanisms? Do you think they are healthy ways to deal with her stress? How do you handle anxieties and fears in your own life?
 10. For Nina a bookstore or library represents sanctuary. Why do you think that is? Do you feel similarly? What are some of your favorite bookstores and libraries? What are other happy places in your life?

11. Tom is not a bookish person, but his character complements Nina's. Why do you think Nina and Tom work so well together as a couple? How do they complement one another? In what ways have your relationships succeeded or failed because of how well you "fit" together?

12. Nina works in an independent bookstore and seems to enjoy the physical - paper version of books. Do you prefer to read physical books or ebooks? Is your enjoyment of books affected by whether or not you read them on paper? In the street battle over books that happens toward the end of the novel, which side would you be on?

13. Los Angeles is a major city, but Larchmont is clearly a very defined neighborhood, with a small-town atmosphere. Are you surprised by that aspect of Los Angeles, and does it conflict with the way the city is normally portrayed in popular culture?

14. In addition to her deep love of books, Nina also loves all forms of popular culture, including movies and TV shows. Do you think that is common, or do most people prefer one over the other? Which do you prefer?



A Conversation with *Abbi* Waxman



Q. You have called *Nina* your "love letter to millennials." What inspired her?

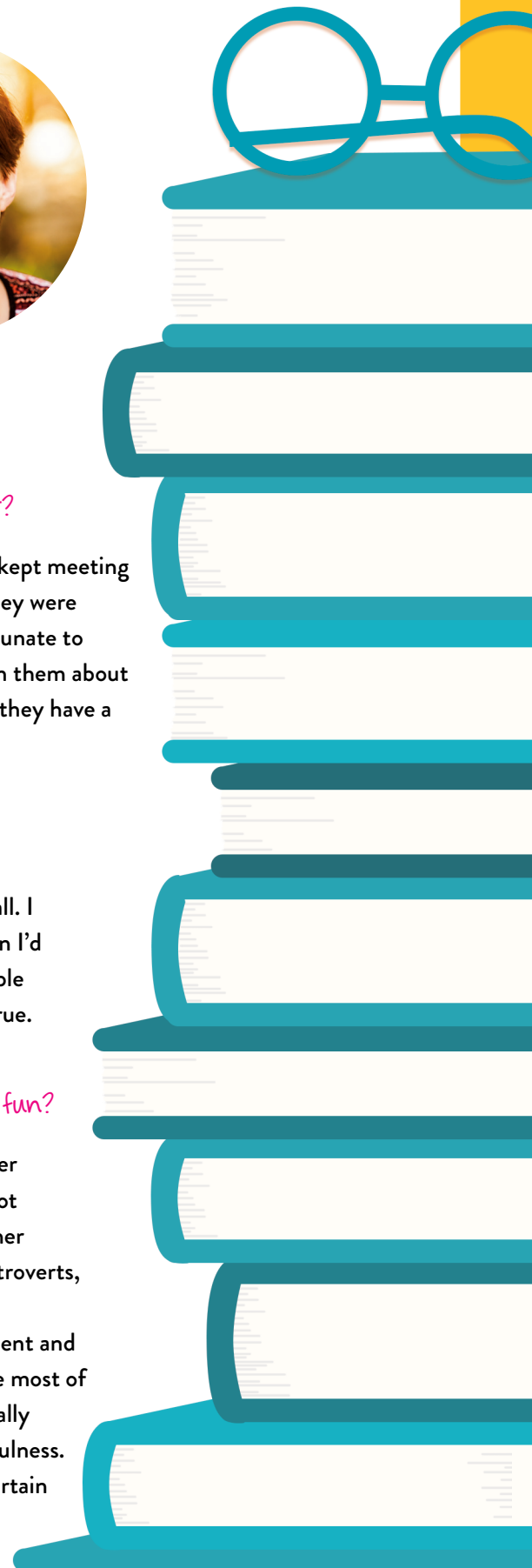
A. When I was doing a book tour for my last book (*Other People's Houses*), I kept meeting these wonderful young women who worked in the bookstores I visited. They were charming, creative, funny, weird... I fell in love with them all. I'm also fortunate to have several good friends of that age and spend a lot of time chatting with them about what their lives are like. I don't understand why millennials get a bad rap, they have a fantastic blend of cynicism and whimsy I love.

Q. What do you want readers to take away from this book?

A. I want readers to walk away from this book amused and satisfied, first of all. I hope all my books are fun to read and a nice escape from reality. And then I'd like them to know that they're not alone, that the world is filled with people who love books and reading and characters and knowledge. Because it's true.

Q. What was the most challenging aspect of writing this book? The most fun?

A. The most challenging part was trying to make sure *Nina* rang true for other millennials. I didn't want her to sound like me (I'm Gen X), and I hope I got it right. I also struggled with balancing her introversion and anxiety with her healthy self-esteem and confidence: People think introverts are failed extroverts, which couldn't be further from the truth. And they think people who get anxiety lack self-confidence. That is also untrue; some of the most confident and self-possessed people I know suffer from anxiety. *Nina's* complicated, like most of us. One early reader was perplexed that she was introverted and yet sexually experienced and confident... That's a stereotype that has outlived its usefulness. It is entirely possible to love yourself, feel good about sex, and still find certain situations terrifying.



Q. Do you share any of Nina's hobbies? Are you into trivia or planner-obsessed?

A. I do love trivia, so that part was fun. And I love planners and organization, but fail completely at maintaining any kind of discipline whatsoever. I'm a good starter, but a crappy whatever comes after that—follower-onner? During my life I've had innumerable diaries and planners that are full in January and empty by March. Oh well.

Q. One thing readers love about your books is characters we want to be best friends with. How do you come up with your characters?

A. I dream up people I would also want to be friends with, it's pretty straightforward. I suck at writing villains, largely because I'm not interested in assholes. If you're not a kind person, or at least polite and interesting, I've got nothing to say to you.

Q. Who was your favorite character in the book, besides Nina?

A. The cat, of course. Always the cat. Unless there's a dog, in which case the dog.



"Everyone has a different five perfect things," claims Nina Hill.

Sure, there are other things, even good things. But everyone has five perfect things. What are yours? List them below and compare with other members of the group. How do they compare to Nina's?

DATE: _____

M T W Th F Sa Su



My 5 Perfect Things:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Nina's Perfect Things:



1. books _____
2. cats _____
3. dogs _____
4. Honeycrisp apples _____
5. coffee _____

TO DO LIST

- ☐ _____
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BONUS: Post a photo online of *The Bookish Life of Nina Hill* and your list of five perfect things! [#thebookishlifeofninahill](#) [#fiveperfectthings](#)