

Lasting Damage

Reading Group Questions

1. Connie veers between doubting her husband, Kit, and doubting herself. Is this understandable? How easy do you think it would be to remain certain of what you knew to be the truth if someone kept calling you a liar and questioning everything you said? Is Connie simply feeble-minded, or might anyone end up as confused as she does by what's going on in her life?
2. Is Connie's close family a source of support/comfort, or an oppressive force in her life? What about Kit's family? Does the novel seem to be saying anything about the relationship between individuals and families? Is family portrayed as an entirely negative thing in Lasting Damage or are there any glimmers of hope?
3. Connie sees a therapist, Alice, at various points in the novel. What effect does Alice have on Connie? Did the novel change your attitude to counselling/psychotherapy at all?
4. Charlie, the police sergeant, feels her sister has betrayed her by starting an affair with her colleague, DC Chris Gibbs, at Charlie and Simon's wedding. Charlie feels Olivia has 'ruined' her and Simon's special day by doing this, and trespassed upon their life. Olivia, meanwhile, believes she's entitled to have an affair with whoever she wants. Whose side are you on?
5. Many of the protagonists of Lasting Damage lie at various points in the novel. Connie doesn't tell Kit she has been spying on 11 Bentley Grove. Charlie doesn't tell Simon that Alice gave her a letter to pass on to him, or that she tore it up. Olivia is deceiving her boyfriend Dominic by having an affair with Chris Gibbs. To what extent does this make them unsympathetic? Do you identify with them because they're flawed, as most people are, or do you dislike them because they're behaving badly towards those close to them?
6. In the early parts of the book, who comes across as a more trustworthy character, Connie or Kit? Who do you believe, before you find out what's really going on?
7. One of the main themes of the novel is place – the different places we think of as 'home' and why. Connie's family has always lived in a tiny village, and yet Connie is desperate to move to a vibrant city. When she and Kit were searching for a house in Cambridge, Connie found she didn't have a clue about what might be the right kind of house for her, and started to worry that she had no clear identity. To what extent did the novel make you question whether your own home and the village/town/city you live in is right for you, or whether you might rather live somewhere else?
8. Toward the end of Lasting Damage, Simon says to Sam Kombothekra and Charlie, 'It's easier for an evil person to pretend to be good than for a clever person to pretend to be stupid'. Is this true, do you think? Do the events in the novel prove it to be either true or untrue in any way?

9. Is *Lasting Damage* more a novel of plot or character, or does it seem to be both equally?
10. The Gilpatricks are central to the story of *Lasting Damage*, and yet they are not really present in the book as characters. Does this work as a device or not?
11. If you could live in either 11 Bentley Grove, 18 Pardoners Lane or Melrose Cottage, which would you choose and why?