

Reading Group Guide

We Have Everything Before Us by Esther Yin-ling Spodek

About *We Have Everything Before Us*

A summer party and a thunderstorm bring relationships into focus, as three women decide how to move forward in this humorous and dramatic tale of intersecting lives.

Eleanor is bored with her two sons and a husband who ignores her when she reconnects with Phil, a man she knew in high school. Phil's wife is leaving him because of his philandering, most recently with the younger Sarayu. Eleanor's friend Kaye doesn't approve of Phil, but she has her own problems: too much drinking and a fraught relationship with her husband and daughter, who are building a boat together. Poignant and acutely observed, *We Have Everything Before Us* is unsparing yet sympathetic as it details the unsettling junction of illusions and reality.

We Have Everything Before Us by Esther Yin-ling Spodek is published by Gibson House Press, April 2020. Original trade paperback, \$16.99 ISBN-13: 978-1-948721-08-0. Ebook formats, \$9.99

Reviews

"Watch yourself. Esther Yin-ling Spodek has peeked in your windows, spied on your neighbors and hacked your email—and she's turned her wry observations into a sharply etched first novel, *We Have Everything Before Us*. Read it and weep (and smile in recognition). You've been warned."— Sharon Fiffer, author of *Imagining America* and the Jane Wheel mysteries

"In Esther Ying-ling Spodek's sparkling debut novel, hell is other people—and sparrows. Bored with her life and lot, Eleanor's thoughts wander to a high school flame. Things come to a head—as things are wont to do in this affluent Chicago suburb—at a backyard barbeque. Blue skies darken, and the violence of a summer storm lays bare the self-doubts and self-delusions of the very real characters who inhabit this darkly comic send-up of everyday American life."— Ian Morris, author of *Simple Machines* and *When Bad Things Happen to Rich People*

"Funny and sad and full of insight about love, loneliness and infidelity. After this impressive debut novel, I can't wait to see what Spodek writes next."— Christopher John Farley, author of *Around Harvard Square*

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About the author

Esther Yin-ling Spodek is a graduate of the University of Virginia and received her MFA in Creative Writing from Indiana University. Her short stories have appeared in literary magazines, and she taught composition at Columbia College in Chicago. She lives in Evanston, Illinois.

Conversation starters

1. What do you think is the meaning of the title WE HAVE EVERYTHING BEFORE US?
2. This novel has strong characters like Eleanor, Kaye, and Sarayu. Which of the characters resonates with you?
3. Why is Phil such a temptation for Eleanor? Who would you say is your Phil?
4. Eleanor and Kaye have a complicated relationship. What do you think of their advice to each other?
5. How do the individual narrators perceive the social situation at the barbecue differently? Why is Eric troubled?
6. What does Sarayu find attractive in Phil? What do you think is happening to their relationship at the end of the book?
7. How would you describe Eleanor and Frank's marriage? Can you picture them in the future?
8. How does the author use weather in the book?