

## Reading Group Guide

### *The Town Crazy* by Suzzy Roche

***The Town Crazy*, set in the sleepy town of Hanzloo, Pennsylvania, a suburban Catholic community**

**in 1961, is a novel of passion, absurdity, innocence, and sorrow.**

A single father moves into town with his young son, which arouses suspicion from the husbands and the interest of the wives, but at the same time one of the wives seems to be losing her mind, and no one knows what to do. A contemporary, often humorous take on a bygone era, *The Town Crazy* also delves into the terror and cruelty of childhood, the dangerous loneliness of failing marriages, sexual repression and desire, and the intersection of art and religion, all culminating in a tragedy for which everyone in the town bears some responsibility.

*The Town Crazy* by Suzzy Roche is published by Gibson House Press, September 2020. Original trade paperback, \$16.99 ISBN-978-1-948721-12-7. Ebook formats, \$9.99; 978-1-948721-23-3.

## Reviews

*“The Town Crazy casts a strong spell, and I don’t think I’ve shaken it off yet, nor do I want to. Suzzy Roche understands so much about other people’s lives; her fiction, just like her singing and songwriting, is thrilling, beautiful, and shattering. I will be thinking about this town, these people, this captivating novel, for a long time.”—Meg Wolitzer, author of *The Female Persuasion* and *The Wife**

*“[I]f you love Suzzy’s songs, you’ll love the tale she spins here and relish each crack it opens up in your heart. No superpowers or dystopian vistas, just a tender map of a group of human hearts.”—Goodreads review*

*“The Town Crazy is an absorbing novel about how damaging hasty assumptions and misplaced discretion can be.”—Foreword Reviews*

*“Singer-songwriter Roche probes the secrets of a small American town in this immersive character-driven tale. . . . Roche’s deep understanding of [the characters] will keep readers engaged all the way to the end.”—Publishers Weekly*

## About the author

**Suzzy Roche** is a singer/songwriter/performer/author and founding member of the singing group The Roches. She has recorded more than fifteen albums, written music for TV and film, and toured extensively in the U.S. and Europe. In addition to *The Town Crazy*, Roche is the author of the novel *Wayward Saints* and the children's book *Want to Be in a Band?* She often tours with her daughter, Lucy Wainwright Roche, and lives in New York City.

## Conversation starters

The book opens with Lil O'Brien: what do you initially think of Lil and her ability to take care of Alice? What exactly was wrong with her? Would you have done anything different had you been in Lil's position?

Was the role the father, Jim O'Brien, played in Alice's life typical for men in this era?

How much is this Alice's story? How does the story shift from different viewpoints?

Clarisse McCarthy, Lil's neighbor, is an unsympathetic character: how did you feel when the story switched to her perspective?

How did your opinion of the different characters change throughout the story? How credible did you find the different narrators? Did you like the change in perspectives?

Clarisse's children Dawn and Fawn played a significant role in Alice's life; how were they foils?

What did Clarisse and Luke Spooner learn about themselves during their brief relationship?

The other parents from the school play the literary role of the Greek chorus that drives much of the action. How does the collective voice affect the behavior of Lil, Clarisse, and Luke Spoon? Have you ever been in such a situation?

Were you shocked by the death of Alice or do you think there was foreshadowing?

How did you feel about the ending? What did you like, what did you not like, and what do you wish had been different?

What are some of the themes that the book explores?