



THE RESERVOIR TAPES

by JON MCGREGOR

Reading Group Guide

1. For those of you who've read *Reservoir 13*, how does *The Reservoir Tapes* expand both the world and the characters of the first novel? Do you consider this a sequel? A prequel? An off-shoot? Or a totally separate work?
2. Stephanie, a sex worker in the village, describes herself as "being in control...more in control than the men who came to see her" (pg. 93). Yet her self-confidence angers some men, including one who attempts to beat her. In what ways are the women in *The Reservoir Tapes*—including Becky, the missing girl—denied autonomy by those around them, and in what ways do they reclaim it for themselves?
3. *The Reservoir Tapes* presents us with two couples whose marriages are in flux: Charlotte and Will; and Jess and Stuart. But while Charlotte decides to divorce Will, Jess instead uses infidelity to maintain peace in her relationship. Do you find yourself sympathizing with one woman over the other? What do these decisions, made by two very different women, tell us of love and marriage?
4. In Claire's chapter, she reminisces briefly on "those long summers with no way out." In what ways does the insularity of this town's community, and the fact that everyone is known to each other, influence the atmosphere and plot of the book? Do the characters seem trapped to you, or are there some who seem able to leave at any time?
5. Becky herself appears in some chapters, but not others. Did you feel like you had a full idea of her as a person, and was fullness what the author was aiming for? What do you think about her?
6. The opening chapter, Charlotte's, consists of a interview with Becky's mother after her disappearance. While we hear the interviewer's questions, musings, and summaries, Charlotte herself does not have a voice. What effect did this have on your reading, and how did this set the tone for the rest of the book?
7. Given that this is a primarily working class town, how do the struggles of ordinary people present themselves in this book? In particular, what was your impression of Irene's struggle after the death of her husband?
8. *The Reservoir Tapes*, like *Reservoir 13*, is full of lush descriptions of place: the woods; the water; the often ominous reservoirs. Did you have any favorite descriptions or moments in the text? How did the physical town and its surroundings impact the atmosphere of the novel?