

CARPOOL DIEM

Reading Group Guide

- 1) When we first meet Annie, she thinks her hectic life is under control. Then everything falls apart. What in Annie's personality helps explain how she ends up so blindsided?
- 2) Because she's living away during the workweek, Annie feels disconnected from her daughter. Watching Charlotte's affectionate interaction with Hildy makes her feel even worse. Given that Charlotte is so attached to her babysitter, should Annie have tried harder to make things work? Is being jealous of our children's relationships with their caregivers an unavoidable fact of life?
- 3) Charlotte is fine with the prospect of being on a C team but Annie isn't. Annie worries that if Charlotte is content with a C team she'll learn to be content with a C life. What does a C life mean to someone like Annie? Do you believe there's a relationship between the level of competitiveness on a kid's team—or any extra-curricular activity—and success in later life?
- 4) Annie wants to encourage Charlotte to be the best she can be. At what point does this change from supportive to obsessive? How far is too far when pushing your kid?
- 5) Trissy is always helpful and supportive to Annie, but because she seems so perfect Annie always feels like a failure whenever she's around. Who's at fault here? Do you know any "perfect" moms? What do you think makes a "perfect mom" annoying?
- 6) After the soccer kick-off meeting, Annie wonders if it's possible that she's finally broken the code of the clan of the soccer mom. Is there a code? Why is it that some people understand unwritten rules while others don't?
- 7) The *Power Pointers News of the Day* bulletins change over time. Do you think the early newsletters are a good motivational tool for Winslow's team? What about the later newsletters? Have you ever received anything like a *Power Pointers* newsletter?
- 8) Despite Winslow's promises, Roy's daughter, Nadine, is not moved up to the A team. His wife thinks they've been blackballed. Why do you think Nadine is denied

advancement? Do you think kids are sometimes held back because of their parents' bad behavior? Some of the team parents make fun of Roy's profession. Does class play a part in team politics?

9) Winslow worries that parents posting comments on the soccer forum will create an atmosphere of pettiness and jealousy. Do you think banning team parents from posting on a website is a legitimate "request"? If young players are expected to listen to all their coach's rules, does that mean parents are obliged to comply in the same way?

10) Vicki and Winslow feel under siege by demanding and demented parents who are always angling to improve their kid's opportunities. Do you think this makes Winslow and Vicki's behavior understandable? Reasonable? Forgivable? Have you ever had an experience with a crazy parent on the sidelines? Has there ever been a crazy coach in charge of your kid's team? What happened?

11) The PC&B management team tells Annie they see their company as a family. Parents on the Asteroids and the Power talk about how their teams are like a family too. Discuss the similarities and differences between Winslow's expectations of Charlotte and her teammates, and the expectations Annie encounters both working at PC&B and as a consultant for Sondra.

12) When Charlotte tells her mother that Winslow is disappointed with the team for not playing hard enough, Annie asks if she's having any fun. Is there an age at which "fun" becomes less important? Is it ever okay for there to be *no* fun?

13) At lunch with Roxanne, Annie learns that some of the qualities that make her a good mother turn out to be valuable skills at work. Do you think abilities used to manage a staff translate to managing children? Do techniques that work at home, work at work? Can compartmentalizing help? Can it go too far?

14) Winslow is impressed that Charlotte has a plan for every day of the week so she can improve her soccer skills. Having a plan of the day is something Charlotte learned from watching her mother. Is this lesson a good thing? What else has Charlotte learned from Annie? What has Annie learned from Charlotte?