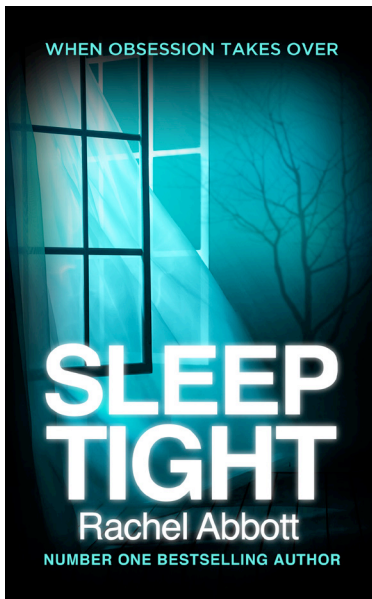


Reading Group Questions

SUMMARY

Please bear in mind that these questions for book clubs assume that readers have read the book. If not please stop reading now as these notes contain SPOILERS.



Sleep Tight is a tale of obsession, deception and retribution.

The story begins with a prologue – a young girl is walking home from the pub after an evening with her student friends when suddenly, and not for the first time that night, she has the sense that she is being followed. It is not until much later in the book that we find that the girl is Olivia, and that someone had been stalking her for quite some time.

The main story opens several years later when Olivia Brookes calls the police because her husband has taken the children out for a pizza and he hasn't come home. Could there have been an accident? But Olivia doesn't think so.

Olivia is already known to the police. Seven years previously she had called them because her Iranian boyfriend had not returned from the laboratory where he was working on his PhD thesis, and she has never seen him since. And then her parents were found dead in their beds – an accident, it would seem. It appears that Olivia has a habit of attracting trouble.

When Robert finally returns home with the children, it is clear to the reader that all is not well in this relationship, but it is hard to tell what is in Olivia's mind, and what is in Robert's.

Two years later, the police are again called to the Brookes' home. But this time, Olivia is missing, and so are the children. Strangely, though, her car is in the garage and her purse on the kitchen table. She has taken no money, no credit cards and no clothes. The children's favourite toys are still in their bedroom, but not a single photo of Olivia or the children can be found anywhere.

The story develops as the police try to find Olivia – dead or alive – and attempt to understand Robert's motivations. But before they can subject him to formal questioning, Robert disappears.

And then they find the blood...

Sleep Tight by Rachel Abbott

DISCUSSION POINTS

1. Olivia first meets Robert when he comes to view her flat – which he immediately buys. Were there any warning signs that Robert’s interest may not have been entirely based on finding somewhere to live?
2. In Part One of *Sleep Tight*, Robert takes the children out for a pizza, and doesn’t come back. What do you think was his intended message to Olivia? If you had been in Olivia’s position, how would you have responded?
3. When Robert visits South Stack Lighthouse on Anglesey with Olivia, he refers to it as “a perfect place to die.” As his wife, how do you think Olivia should have reacted to this statement, and what could she have read into it?
4. Tom’s experience with Olivia and Robert in the past is based around the disappearance of Danush and the death of Olivia’s parents. Robert was the man who appeared to come to her rescue. What preconceptions about the couple do you think Tom may have had when he first heard that Olivia was missing? In what way do you think this may have affected his judgement?
5. Olivia is trapped. She knows that if she leaves Robert, he will be allowed contact with the children. Anything she tells the courts about his threats will be disregarded, and she runs the risk of being deemed hostile. What options do you think Olivia had to get her children to safety and keep them from ever spending time alone with Robert again?
6. Sophie describes obsession as a “hideous, contorted serpent that lurks beneath the skin, writhing with frustration until the object of its desire is under its control”. Discuss obsession, how it can present itself, how it can grow, and what steps Olivia might have taken to diffuse the situation.
7. Tom is struggling in his relationship with Leo. Discuss Leo’s outlook – “I don’t do tomorrows”, and Tom’s desire for commitment. What might have shaped their attitudes?
8. As becomes apparent at the end of the book, Olivia has been aware for some time of the lengths Robert has gone to in order to remove both Danush and her parents from her life. Discuss how this knowledge must have impacted on Olivia’s daily life and that of her children.
9. Tom is convinced that Olivia set Robert up, but he has no evidence and no means of obtaining any evidence. Discuss his inner conflicts at this point.
10. In the final scene when Olivia visits the spot on Saddleworth Moor where she believes Danush might be buried, Sophie, Samir and Olivia would inevitably have reflected on how things might have been different if each of them had reacted differently to situations going back several years. Discuss how they might be feeling and how each of them could have changed the course of the story.