

Discussion Questions

The Motion of the Ocean by Janna Cawrse Esarey

1. The book opens with the author thinking her husband is an "asshole," but after they survive a small calamity together, she says she has never felt so in love. When have you experienced this flip-flop of emotions about a loved one? How does Janna reveal both the positive and negative aspects of marriage, of her husband, and of herself?
2. Looking at the mint paint in her foyer, Janna says the little color squares trick you into thinking you know what you are getting. Is this an apt metaphor for choosing a life partner? Why or why not? What can prepare us for this decision? How does one choose the One?
3. Throughout the book Janna is a "Pokey Person," while Graeme is ultra efficient. What are the pluses and minuses of these approaches to time? What kind of person are you, and how does this affect your relationships?
4. The pink and blue division of labor challenges Janna's sense of worth aboard Dragonfly. How do the pink and blue play out in your life? Do these divisions impact your sense of worth, or do you identify with the attitudes of Janna's cruising girlfriends?
5. Early on, Janna wonders if marriage means drinking only from the relationship's cup. By the end, she argues couples need otherness to thrive in togetherness. Do you agree? How can a couple build otherness while staying close and committed?
6. Janna says the space between point A and point B terrifies and teaches the most. How is this borne out in the voyage? What do Janna and Graeme learn in these in-between spaces? Consider your own crossings between life stages and what you learned in the space between.
7. Back home in Seattle, Janna says what matters is not the what but the how - that one can live an extraordinary life inside an ordinary one. True or false? What is your big, audacious goal? How might you pursue it?
8. At sea, monotony is constant yet always changing. Janna notes a monotony in marriage that is delightful and dangerous. What were the dangerous and delightful moments for the couple? How can staying attentive through monotony change the way you see daily life?
9. In French Polynesia, Janna and Graeme "mark the passage" with tattoos. How does this help them make sense of the crossing and their first year of marriage? How do you mark your own passages through life?
10. The couple often holds completely different views of the same event. How do diverging perspectives strain or enhance their relationship? When has your view of an event diverged from someone else's, and what did you take away?
11. Janna believes their honeymoon tests the boat, their seamanship, and their relationship. Would Graeme agree? If this journey is a test, how would you grade their success or failure, and why?
12. Discuss the pros and cons of Janna's notion of the One, Graeme's anti-One thesis, and Frits's Green Box Theory of Love. Which view aligns with yours, and why? Do you have your own working theory of love?