



Summary

Though they look like any other family, they aren't one—not quite. They are three sets of parents who find themselves intertwined after adopting four biological siblings, having committed to keeping the children as connected as possible. At the heart of the family, the adoptive mothers grapple to define themselves and their new roles. Tabitha, who adopted the twins, crowns herself planner of the group, responsible for endless playdates and holidays, determined to create a perfect happy family. Quiet and steady Ginger, single mother to the eldest daughter, is wary of the way these complicated not-fully-family relationships test her long held boundaries. And Elizabeth, still reeling from rounds of failed IVF, is terrified that her unhappiness after adopting a newborn means she was not meant to be a mother at all. As they set out on their first family vacation, all three are pushed into uncomfortably close quarters. And when they receive a call from their children's birth mother announcing she is pregnant again, the delicate bonds the women are struggling to form threaten to collapse as they each must consider how a family is found and formed.

Discussion Questions

- *Any Other Family* asks the question: What makes a Family? After reading this novel, what do you think are the elements that tie a family together? What does the term “family” mean to you?
- 2.Tabitha, Ginger and Elizabeth are three very different women. Discuss the ways in which each respond to the tenuous sisterhood formed between them. Did you relate to any of the mothers in particular? How so?
- At the start of the novel, Tabitha has very specific expectations for how the family vacation will go. Why does Tabitha cling to these ideas? What goes Wrong and makes her lose control?
- Discuss the relationship between the children: Phoebe, Tate, Taylor, and baby Violet. What do you think about their relationships with one another? Are there any particular moments during which the sibling relationships stand out to you?
- Elizabeth insists that she does not want to adopt the new baby. Why does she feel this way? Do you agree or disagree with her decision?
- Talk about the ways in which Ginger tries to set boundaries for herself in the novel. Do her rules help or hinder her involvement in the family?
- *Any Other Family* includes excerpts from hopeful adoptive parent applications. How did the inclusion of those pieces impact your reading experience? Were there any specific entries that resonated with you?
- This novel explores the many different ways in which people come to be parents. Were any of the paths surprising to you? Did the novel challenge or confirm any perceptions or assumptions you had about adoption or adoptive parenting?
- What do you believe makes a good parent? How do each of the characters reckon with this question?
- What do you think is next for the Basnight-Kowalski-Evans family? Who do you think was chosen to adopt the baby?

Questions courtesy of the publisher.



About the Author

Eleanor Brown is the New York Times bestselling author of *The Weird Sisters* and *The Light of Paris*, and the editor of the anthology *A Paris All Your Own*. She lives in Colorado with her family.

Courtesy of the publisher

<https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/authors/129630/eleanor-brown/>

Book reviews

Review by Freya Sachs

BookPage

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What does it mean to be a family? Why do people adopt children? How does a person choose to be, or not be, a parent? When a novel asks questions such as these, there's often a singular instance or moment that provides an answer, or at the very least, a primary lens through which the possibilities are considered. The beauty of Eleanor Brown's third novel is that she positions these questions in conversation, asking the how, why and what through the stories of several parents. We see many different choices and the ramifications of each. The family in *Any Other Family* is constructed on its own terms: As the novel opens, four siblings live with three sets of parents. Each child was born to the same young woman, who chose open adoptions, enabling the children to maintain relationships not only with her but also with each other. The whole family is committed to raising the children with regular gatherings for Sunday dinners and holidays. And now, for the first time, they're all taking a two-week family vacation, during which time they'll learn to interact in new ways, encounter unexpected challenges and be forced, again, to consider how they form a family and what, exactly, that might mean.

The novel unfolds through the alternating perspectives of the three adoptive mothers, revealing their strengths and challenges with equal care. Brown's tenderness toward these women, as well as the fathers, their children and the birth mother and father, draws readers toward empathy as well, as we feel our way into the complexities and nuances of the characters' seemingly impossible choices. Empathy functions differently when examples are iterative, and one of the greatest rewards of reading Brown's novel is the ability to engage with a multiplicity of perspectives.

There's joy to be found in the struggle, and *Any Other Family* offers a thoughtful space to experience this truth.

Courtesy of BookPage

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