Book Club Questions

At the start of the book, Anton prefers to be called Anthony. Eventually, he finds his way back to his original name. What do you think each name represented for him, and why did he ultimately choose Anton by the end?

Anton suffered tremendous trauma with the death of his brother. Even though they are part of the same family, and suffered the same loss, Anton’s parents handle their grief in very different ways. What do you think his parents’ choices say about their ability to cope and take Anton’s needs into consideration?

Throughout Anton’s life, his great-uncle and grandmother act as allies, each in their own way. What do you think their challenges were in trying to be there for Anton without interfering in his family life and with his parents’ wishes?

Anton witnesses Edith’s domestic violence. At first, he can’t understand why she would continue to allow that abuse. Shortly before Edith finally leaves her husband, she tells Anton, “Now there’s somebody watching it happen. And that’s just . . . unbearable.” Why do you think having a witness to her situation made such a monumental difference?

Anton continues to hide Edith and eventually helps her escape. Later in the book, when they reconnect, they both question whether they made the right decision back then to part instead of staying together. Do you think it was the right or wrong choice for both of them at the time?

After Edith disappears to escape her husband’s abuse, Anton is heartbroken. Then he remembers something from his sessions in the hospital after his brother died: “That looking directly at a painful truth hurts less than being stalked by it.” Do you agree with this philosophy? Do you think it helped him in the long run?

In trying to teach Anton about true love, his grandmother tells him the story of when his grandfather was dying and she really wanted him to stay with her. She says, “I let him make a decision to go forward to a future that did not include me. Because I loved him that much.” How did Anton’s understanding of his grandmother’s words affect the decisions he made in the future?

Many years later Anton is in a romantic relationship with a woman named Amy. When he unexpectedly runs into Edith again, everything changes. Up until that time, he didn’t know which hurt worse, staying with Amy or leaving her. Do you think he made the right decision in the end?

The celestial beauty of the stars and the universe are a thread that runs through the entire book. In the final pages, Anton must face that Edith, the true love of his life, is dying. In what ways did this final scene together bring the book to a poignant closure?