**The Leftovers by Tom Perrotta**

When a bizarre phenomenon causes the cataclysmic disappearances of numerous people all over the world, Kevin Garvey, the new mayor of a once-comfortable suburban community, struggles to help his neighbors heal while enduring the fanatical religious conversions of his wife and son.

**Why you'll like it:** Darkly humorous. Thought-provoking. Engaging. Witty.

**About the Author:** Tom Perrotta's comic and realistic fiction frequently explores the psychological depths surging under the surface of an ordinary suburb; he has been praised both for his empathy and skill at portraying deep emotion and for his sidesplitting (and sometimes subversive) humor. He creates fully fledged characters you can recognize yourself in, even when they do things you can't approve of, and situations that are timely and complex.

**Questions for Discussion**

1. What is The Leftovers about? Is this a religious, or anti-religious, book. Is it even about religion? If not...what is it about?

2. In what ways does the world change after the Sudden Departure. What affect does it have on those left behind—both devout Christians and those not so devout? How does the departure differ from the The Rapture? What about a possible parallel with the events of 9/11—do you see any overtones of what the US went through in the aftermath of that national trauma?

3. Talk about the various groups that spring up—the Barefoot People, the Guilty Remnant. In what way are their formations a response to the Sudden Departure?

4. If the Sudden Departure occurred in real life, today, how do you think our society would react? How would you, or your family, react if a loved one departed? Would it the disappearances be a good thing, if you're a Christian, or difficult thing to cope with?

5. Is Perrotta's novel humorous or sad—a comedy or tragedy? Is it a satire?

6. Discuss Laura's decision to pull back from her budding relationship with Kevin. Is she justified in doing so, particularly in light of what she discovers about her husband? Is her pain too deeply felt, or might her sadness have abated had she started a new life with Kevin?
7. How well does Perrotta depict ordinary individuals dealing with loss? Are his characters realistic, believable? Or are they cartoonish and one-dimensional?

8. What larger issues, other than the Sudden Departure (or the Rapture), might be at stake in Perrotta's novel—what might he be making a broader statement about?

(Questions provided by Litlovers.com)