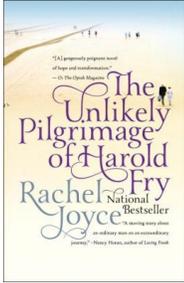


# Books by the Stack



## *The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry* by Rachel Joyce

Convinced that he must deliver a letter in person to an old love in order to save her, Harold Fry is determined to walk six hundred miles from Kingsbridge to the hospice in Berwick-upon-Tweed. As he meets various characters along the way, he reminisces about the events and people of his past and tries to find peace and acceptance.

**Why you'll like it:** *Hopeful. English countryside. Funny. The Everyman*

**About the Author:** Rachel Joyce has written over 20 original afternoon plays for BBC Radio 4, and major adaptations for both the Classic Series, Woman's Hour and also a TV drama adaptation for BBC 2. In 2007 she won the Tinniswood Award for best radio play. She moved to writing after a twenty-year career in theatre and television, performing leading roles for the RSC, the Royal National Theatre, The Royal Court, and Cheek by Jowl, winning a Time Out Best Actress award and the Sony Silver. (Goodreads)

### Questions for Discussion

1. Why does the story that the garage girl tells Harold affect him so deeply? Do you think Harold would have mused on faith and gone on this tremendous journey had the garage girl told Harold that her aunt died of cancer anyway?
2. How does Maureen's relationship with Rex allow her the perspective to understand Harold's decision to walk?
3. The publicity that Harold receives on his journey often feels like a curse. What are some benefits that come out of the media coverage?
4. What does Harold's choice to live off the land and other people's kindness mean to him?
5. In what ways is the incident at the beach with his son representative of Harold's fears about himself? In what ways do those fears reflect the reality?
6. "He had not said goodbye to his son. Maureen had; but Harold had not. There would always be this difference." Do you think anything would have been different for Harold had he had the moment of closure with David's body at the funeral home? How did this difference manifest over the years?
7. How might things have been different for Harold and Maureen if she had told him about Queenie's visit to the house in which she explained why she took the blame? Maureen thinks her withholding of this information caused years of irreversible damage. How might Harold have been affected if he'd known any sooner that Queenie didn't blame him at all?
8. What state did you think Queenie would be in when Harold reached the end of his journey? Were you surprised by their interaction once he got there? How do you think that scene might have been changed if Harold had arrived any sooner?

- 9.** Think about all the people Harold met along the way—the garage girl, the barkeep, the woman with the apples and water, Martina, Wilf. Had Harold not met even one of them, might his journey have diverged, stalled, or even ended before he reached Queenie?
- 10.** Where would Harold be today if he hadn't made his pilgrimage? What would the state of his relationship with Maureen be? How would news of Queenie's death have affected him? What would his life look like?
- 11.** What would it take to get you to make an extraordinary journey? Is there anyone or anything that could compel you to walk six hundred miles? What would such a journey mean to you?



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