

Defending Jacob

Author: William Landay

Genre: Thriller/Suspense

Average Rating: 3 / 5

Book Club Questions:

1. First thing first: Did Jacob Barber murder Ben Rifkin?
2. Who did you believe was Ben's murderer at the beginning and how did that opinion develop as the case progressed? What did you think of the Patz alternative?
3. The book includes sections of a court transcript before a Grand Jury in the not too distant future. Which case did you think Logiudice was prosecuting?
4. What did you think of Andy Barber's character? Considering that he was a DA for decades, did you find his unshakable belief in his son believable? Should he have been more cynical?
5. What did you think of Laurie's character development from the perfect-mother-lynchpin of her social group to the empty shell of a woman to being slowly put back together, and then ultimately to the woman who killed her son?
6. What did you think about the murder gene storyline? Did you agree or disagree with Andy's decision to not tell anyone, even his wife, about his family history?
7. What did you think about the knife storyline? Andy got rid of the knife and his wife dumped the decoy. Were these good or stupid moves?
8. Andy says over and over that the murder gene is not a thing because he is not like his father. But we see anger and aggressive impulses from him on more than one occasion.

For example:

- When he pulls Matt Magrath into his mother's bedroom.
- When he drives into Patz's vehicle.
- When he takes the bat out to the mysterious car at the curb.

What was your opinion of this plot point? Andy goes above and beyond to claim that he is not the least bit violent, but it would appear that he simply has a better hold on his violent impulses.

*** Point of interest: Andy makes a comment about Jacob not having the "steel to be a Barber" and then later his father Billy refers to himself as steel: "You can't hurt steel."

9. Have you ever thought about that fine distinction between being innocent and "not guilty"?
"A jury could only declare my son 'not guilty,' never 'innocent'."
10. Did you see the disappearance and "drowning" of Hope coming? Do you believe that Jacob did it?