

# Book Club Discussion Questions

A man without a her is a man without hope, so believes Coach Zuke who has returned to his hometown of Horseshoe, Indiana to be the head basketball coach. Zuke wants to meet a woman, and it's not long before possibilities emerge: his girlfriend from high school teaches in the room next to him, there is the older sister of one of his players, a girl he knew from college, and a botched matchmaking attempt by his best friend Cheese. Troubles mount in the form of angry parents and an assistant coach who clearly has plans to steal the head coaching position. Set in 1994 to the backdrop of the OJ Simpson murder trial, Kurt Cobain's death, and Prince Charles's confession on television to having cheated on Lady Di, *The Coach's Wife* is a novel about the trials of coaching in a basketball-obsessed state and what happens to one young man too desperate to find a wife.

1. Zuke tells readers in the first line of his story, "A man without a her is a man without hope." He senses a level of emptiness in his life that he believes can be filled by a woman. Can a relationship do this? Have you entered relationships hoping to have some sort of void filled by the company and love of another person?
2. After graduating from college, Zuke returns to his hometown to be the head basketball coach. If he were your friend or son, would you advise him against this?
3. Zuke tells us his own story looking back on his meeting of Julie from some time in the future. When it comes to Julie and the people in the Horseshoe community, do you trust him to tell the story fairly? Does he seem to understand anything from his current point of view that he didn't back when he first met Julie?
4. Zuke coaches and dates in a small town. What contrasts do you sense between doing his job in a large city such as Chicago

or Atlanta versus his working and living in Horseshoe?

5. If you could have sat down for a drink with Zuke before he started dating Julie exclusively, what would have you told him?
6. How would you describe Zuke's attitude toward women? Is he sexist, ignorant, or would you say he understands women pretty well?
7. The novel references Kurt Cobain, OJ Simpson, and the marriage of Charles and Diana. Why do you think these are details the author thought were worth mentioning?
8. Early in the novel, Zuke outlines a relative pain scale for broken bones, cuts, strep throat, and sprained ankles. Do you agree with his scale? Whether it's the dentist or having a baby, what sort of pains are the worst?
9. From the standpoint of someone to date or as a friend to Zuke, is Cheese a bad guy?
10. Zuke is always trying to prevision his life. For example, when Marie invites him for coffee, he tries to imagine what it will be like when he gets there. Does this seem helpful? Healthy? Odd?
11. Zuke says he almost changed his plan and decided to fall in love with Andi. Can a person decide to fall in love?
12. Zuke runs with Colleen. If you're Colleen's husband, are you okay with her having male friends?
13. What do you think of Zuke's decision to take Julie to Cheese and Abby's wedding? Did he share with Julie an appropriate amount of his history with Abby and Cheese?
14. Zuke writes letters. Do you still write letters? Did you used

to and stop? What do we lose if we lose handwritten letters or even typed letters that arrive in the mail? When is the last time you sent or received one?

15. Can you list any other characters in addition to Zuke and Julie? What causes them to be interesting or memorable?
16. Could you date, maybe even eventually marry, someone who had been love with one of your friends?
17. When Zuke tells his parents about Julie and her daughter Diana, they ask lots of questions. How much of someone's history is appropriate to ask about? Did you (would you) want to know all about your future spouse's romantic history?
18. As Zuke interacted with different women, (Colleen, Becca, Marie, and Candace) was there one in particular you were hoping for him to end up with? Who would have you had Zuke end up with?
19. Would you want Zuke to date your daughter, coach your son, or teach your kid?
20. What's your prognosis for Zuke and Julie's marriage?