

Discussion Guide for Finding Ruth

1. Can you relate to Ruth's desire to find a more fulfilling life than the one she shared with Blake? Do you think her life would've been better if she'd stayed married to him?
2. How much do you think the era Ruth grew up in shaped her decisions? How is today's society different from that of the mid-1900s? Do you think women have it easier in the 21st century? Harder? About the same, but different?
3. Ruth divorced her first husband in 1956, at a time when divorce was not common. Do you think she fought the stigma associated with a failed marriage? Do you think maybe she stayed with Maurice so long because she didn't want to have two strikes against her?
4. In 1969, Ruth's situation at work became unbearable for her, thanks to her boss proclaiming his undying love for her. She felt she had no other option than to quit a job that she really liked and desperately needed. In today's world, would Mr. Stockman's advances be viewed as harassment?
5. Do you think women in general have better support from today's society when it comes to domestic issues? Worse off? About the same level, but different?
6. Do you think Ruth's decision to remarry after her second and third divorces was brave or short-sided? Do you think the three aborted engagements influenced her decision to tie the knot again? Would you classify her decision as desperate, naïve or her only viable option?
7. When Ruth freed herself of her last husband, do you think she would've been better off avoiding men altogether? Would you say that despite everything, Ruth truly enjoyed the company of men?
8. In 1985, Ruth took the bold step of moving to a place she'd never even visited before. How did the move and her experiences during the first five years in Seattle change your opinion of her? Did you find yourself applauding her courage and her success at assimilating into the life she had always wanted?
9. Other than brief periods, Ruth worked most of her adult life. She would've continued to work after recovering from her mastectomy had she not been fired. Do you think being in the workforce for decades was beneficial or detrimental for her?
10. How do you see Ruth's life playing out if she had successfully married any of her would-be husbands—Lloyd, Danny, Hal? Do you think she'd have been overall happier if she'd had someone in her life she could've depended on?

11. What do you think was a bigger struggle for Ruth—being the sole wage earner for herself and her children, or not having anyone to give her love and emotional support? How many men or women do you know who've been solely responsible for providing both physical and emotional welfare to their children? Are you one of them? Did Ruth's saga strike any chords with you personally?
12. Ruth faced some serious blows to her health. The last and most profound was Alzheimer's. In her case, the disease took over her brain so swiftly, she didn't notice the change and therefore was spared the anguish of knowing that she was losing control of her greatest asset, her very sharp mind. In her case, this was a blessing. How many people do you know who are struggling with the disease—either personally or with a loved one?
13. Many people have been strongly affected by this book. After reading Ruth's story, what strikes you most? What feelings and impressions are you left with?