

Discussion questions for Things We Didn't Say

- 1) Casey seeks to reinvent herself, starting with her name and cutting all ties to her old life. Have you ever wished you could start completely over?
- 2) What do you think is the real motivation for Casey's attempt to erase her past? Do you think she her life changed for the better as a result of doing so?
- 3) Do you think Michael would have given Casey a chance early in their dating days if she'd been up front with him about her old habits? Early in a relationship, do you believe it's beneficial for someone to be an "open book," or is it better to hold some things close to the vest?
- 4) Was Casey prepared to be a stepmother at the time she moved into the Heritage Hill house? Has that changed by the end of the novel? Do you know any stepparents, or are you one yourself? Given the prevalence of blended families, do you think being a stepparent is easier these days than in the past?
- 5) What do you think lies at the root of Michael's perfectionism? Can you relate to his perfectionism in some way?
- 6) How does Michael's perfectionism affect himself and his family? Does he realize how his actions take a toll on others?
- 7) Michael and Mallory had sharply different upbringings and seem like a case of opposites attracting. Do you know of couples like this, apparent mismatches who are trying to make it work? Is it ever possible to make it last?
- 8) Is there a scenario in which Michael and Mallory could have lasted as a couple, or was their relationship doomed from the start?
- 9) Do you perceive Mallory as villain, victim, innocent, or some combination? Does her character elicit compassion or frustration, or both?
- 10) Do you believe Mallory has undiagnosed mental health problems? How much responsibility does she bear for her own actions?
- 11) The children each have their own struggles, which they seem reluctant to share with their parents for various reasons. What could Michael have done to get his children to open up? Is it inevitable that children have secrets from their parents?
- 12) Do you think social class plays a role in the characters' relationships and conflicts? If so, how, and to what end?
- 13) How does the title relate to each character's story? What are the things they didn't say and what difference would it have made if they'd spoken up?
- 14) Are there things in your own life you never say out loud? If so, why don't you share what you think? If you speak your mind, do you feel that it always helps the situation, or do you ever regret things you've said?
- 15) How optimistic (or not) do you feel for the family at the end of the book? What are some things you imagine happening to the characters after the book's ending?