

Accidental Tourist Discussion Questions

1. How would you categorize the genre of this novel? Did the style remind you of any other authors?
2. Tyler's Quaker parents moved the family to a commune in North Carolina. Her mother was a social worker, and her husband was an Iranian psychiatrist. Do you see any of these influences in the novel?
3. Does the emphasis on the Baltimore locale add or detract from the story? Tyler is friendly with John Waters, another Baltimore fixture. Do they seem to have anything in common?
4. Macon thinks he has never really "taken steps and acted". Does this insight seem accurate or is it colored by the helplessness he feels about his son's death?
5. What symbols does the author use to reinforce Macon's sense of isolation and passivity?
6. Larry McMurty noted that Tyler's characters tend to be "semi-attentive males and semi-obsessed females....Her men slump around like tired tourists" needing prompting. Do the characters seem fully developed? Which characters seemed to grow and which stayed in their "grooves"?
7. Does Macon's compulsive search for order make him an annoying character? Was his style of mourning understandable? Do you empathize with Sarah when she decides to leave him?
8. How is humor used in the novel? Did any passages make you laugh?
9. Were there any weaknesses in the novel? Was Edward's breakdown more interesting than Macon's?
10. Would you recommend this book? Did it seem too romantic or sentimental?