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*The following discussion questions for **A Fortunate Age** by Joanna Smith Rakoff are intended to help your reading group find new and interesting angles and topics for your discussion. We hope that these ideas will enrich your conversation and increase your enjoyment of the book.*

1. *A Fortunate Age* chronicles the lives of a group of friends in their late twenties struggling to carve out careers in the arts and stay afloat financially while feeling an unexpected pull to get married, have children, have some of the comforts with which they'd grown up. Talk about some of the pivotal moments in your own starting-out years and how Joanna Smith Rakoff captures similar moments in the novel.
2. How does the time period in which the novel is set affect the lives of the characters? Describe the shift that happens after the fall of the dot-coms and after the 9/11 attacks on New York City.
3. Discuss how the New York setting, particularly Brooklyn, shapes the novel. What was happening in Brooklyn at this time? Do you think this story is unique to New York or is it universal?
4. Do you think Smith Rakoff was influenced by the great Victorian novels? If so discuss the books, the writers, and the ways in which their influence is apparent in Smith Rakoff's work. What are some of the common themes?
5. While the main characters are all in their starting-out years, the parents of the characters play a significant role in the novel, and because the Peregrines are significantly older than the other parents, there are really three generations depicted here. Discuss the generational differences exhibited. How do Lil, Beth, Emily, Dave, Tal, and Sadie reflect their parents' beliefs and ways of life? How do they resist or reject them?
6. How does Smith Rakoff approach storytelling? How does she introduce characters and develop their individual storylines while moving the novel forward? How does she handle time?

7. How do the different characters define success? Which characters are successful? What are the sources of their greatest fears and their greatest joys?

8. *A Fortunate Age* is a chronicle of a generation. Do you think Smith Rakoff is critical of her characters? Is the novel a gentle satire of this generation? If so, discuss the ways in which this satire is evident.

9. Discuss the title. What makes this particular time period fortunate or unfortunate? Could the title also be applied to the age of the characters? If so, in what way? Do you think the title is ironic? What other titles does *A Fortunate Age* recall?

10. *A Fortunate Age* is loosely based on Mary McCarthy's classic novel *The Group*. What are some of the similarities and differences between the two books? Discuss some of the cultural parallels between New York of the 1930s and New York of the late 1990s and early 2000s. How has the role of women changed?