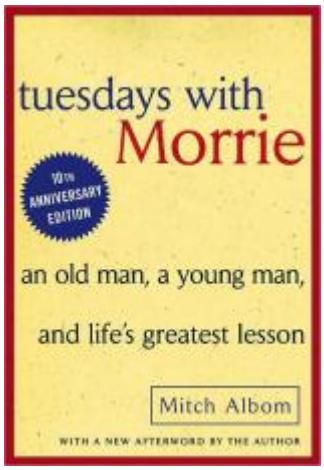
bookreporter

Tuesdays with Morrie

by Mitch Albom



About the Book

Maybe it was a grandparent, or a teacher, or a colleague. Someone older, patient and wise, who understood you when you were young and searching, helped you see the world as a more profound place, gave you sound advice to help you make your way through it.

For Mitch Albom, that person was Morrie Schwartz, his college professor from nearly twenty years ago.

Maybe, like Mitch, you lost track of this mentor as you made your way, and the insights faded, and the world seemed colder. Wouldn't you like to see that person again, ask the bigger questions that still haunt you, receive wisdom for your busy life today the way you once did when you were younger?

Mitch Albom had that second chance. He rediscovered Morrie in the last months of the older man's life. Knowing he was dying, Morrie visited with Mitch in his study every Tuesday, just as they used to back in college. Their rekindled relationship turned into one final “class”: lessons in how to live.

Tuesdays with Morrie is a magical chronicle of their time together, through which Mitch shares Morrie's lasting gift with the world.

It’s been ten years since Mitch Albom first shared the wisdom of Morrie Schwartz with the world. Now–twelve million copies later–in a new afterword, Mitch Albom reflects again on the meaning of Morrie’s life lessons and the gentle, irrevocable impact of their Tuesday sessions all those years ago. . .

Discussion Guide

1. Did your opinion about Mitch change as book went on? In what way?

2. Who do you think got more out of their Tuesday meetings, Mitch or Morrie? In what ways? How do you think each would answer this question?

3. Do you think Mitch would have come back to Morrie's house the second time if he hadn't been semi-idled by the newspaper strike?

4. Discuss Morrie's criticisms of Mitch throughout the book. Do you think Morrie should have been tougher on him? Easier?

5. Do you think Mitch would have listened if Morrie hadn't been dying? Does impending death automatically make one's voice able to penetrate where it couldn't before?

Let's Talk About Death

6. Does this book make Morrie's death a public event? If so, how is it similar to other public deaths we've experienced as a society? How is it different?

7. Morrie referred to himself as a bridge, a person who is in between life and death, which makes him useful to others as a tool to understand both. Talk about other literary, historical, political, or religious figures who have also served this purpose.

8. Most of us have read of people discussing the way they'd like to die, or, perhaps, have been a part of that conversation. One common thought is that it would be best to live a long, healthy life and then die suddenly in one's sleep. After reading this book, what do you think about that? Given a choice, would Morrie have taken that route instead of the path he traveled?

9. On "Nightline," Morrie spoke to Ted Koppel of the pain he still felt about his mother's death seventy years prior to the interview. Is your experience with loss similar or different? Does what you've read in this book help ease any of that pain?

10. Morrie was seventy-eight years old when diagnosed with ALS. How might he have reacted if he'd contracted the disease when he was Mitch's age? Would Morrie have come to the same conclusions? The same peace and acceptance? Or is his experience also a function of his age?

Let's Talk About Meaning

11. Try the "effect of silence" exercise that Mitch described in your class or in your group. What do you learn from it?

12. Talk about the role of meaningful coincidence, synchronicity, in the book and in Mitch and Morrie's friendship.

13. Morrie told Mitch about the "tension of opposites" (p. 40). Talk about this as a metaphor for the book and for society.

14. Mitch made a list of topics about which he wanted Morrie's insight and clarity. In what ways would your list be the same or different?

15. Discuss the book in terms of structure, voice, and tone, paying attention to Mitch's use of flashbacks and other literary devices. How do his choices add to the meaning?

16. Are college students today missing out because they don't have the meaningful experiences that students in the 1960s had? Do you think Morrie thought they were?

17. Morrie said, "If you've found meaning in your life, you don't want to go back. You want to go forward" (p. 118). Is this true in your experience?

Let's Talk About Religion, Culture, and Ritual

18. Morrie believed, "You have to be strong enough to say if the culture doesn't work, don't buy it. Create your own" (pp. 35-36). How can people do this? How can this book help?

19. As his visits with Morrie continued, Mitch explored some other cultures and religions and how each views death. Discuss these and others that you've studied.

20. To the very end, Mitch arrived at Morrie's house with food. Discuss the importance of this ritual.

Let's Talk About Relationships

21. Was Morrie making a judgment on people who choose not to have kids with his statement: "If you want the experience of having complete responsibility for another human being, and to learn how to love and bond in the deepest way, then you should have children" (p. 93)? Whether or not he was, do you agree?

22. Mitch wrote, "Perhaps this is one reason I was drawn to Morrie. He let me be where my brother would not" (p. 97). Discuss Mitch's relationship with Peter.

23. Discuss the practical side of Morrie's advice: "Only an open heart will allow you to float equally between everyone" (p. 128). How could this advice be useful the next time you're in a social or other situation where you feel out of place or uncomfortable?

24. Morrie said that in marriage, "Your values must be alike" (p. 149). In what ways do you agree or disagree?

25. Would Morrie's lessons have carried less weight if Mitch and Peter hadn't resumed contact by book's end?

Author Bio

Mitch Albom is a bestselling author, screenwriter, playwright and nationally-syndicated columnist. The author of five consecutive No.1 *New York Times* bestsellers, his books have collectively sold more than 33 million copies in 42 languages worldwide. TUESDAYS WITH MORRIE*,* which spent four straight years atop the *New York Times* list, is now the bestselling memoir of all time.

Four of Albom's books, including MORRIE, THE FIVE PEOPLE YOU MEET IN HEAVEN, FOR ONE MORE DAY and HAVE A LITTLE FAITH*,* have been made into highly acclaimed TV movies for ABC. Oprah Winfrey produced "Tuesdays With Morrie," which claimed four Emmy awards including a best actor nod for Jack Lemmon in the lead role. Albom's most recent novel, THE TIME KEEPER, debuted at No. 1 on *The New York Times* list in September of 2012.

In collaboration with Jeffrey Hatcher, Albom adapted TUESDAYS WITH MORRIE into a hit play that opened off-Broadway in late 2002 and has since seen hundreds of versions produced across the US and Canada. As a columnist for *The Detroit Free Press*, Albom has won more than 200 writing awards, including the Red Smith Award for lifetime achievement in sports writing. Albom also hosts a daily radio program and is a frequent presence on ESPN.

Albom has founded six charities in and around Detroit, including the first ever 24-hour medical clinic for homeless children in America. He also operates an orphanage in Port-Au-Prince, Haiti, dedicated to the safety, education and spiritual development of impoverished children who were victims of the 2010 earthquake.

Albom lives with his wife, Janine, in metropolitan Detroit.

Critical Praise

"All of the saints and Buddhas have taught us that wisdom and compassion are one. Now along comes Morrie, who makes it perfectly plain. His living and dying show us the way."

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Publication Date: October 8, 2002
Genres: Memoir
Paperback: 192 pages
Publisher: Broadway
ISBN-10: 076790592X
ISBN-13: 9780767905923