

Questions and Topics for Discussion for *The Unnamed*, by Joshua Ferris

1. Discuss the novel's opening paragraph. Why is it important that this story begins in the winter? What mood do the opening sentences create?
2. How would you describe the state of Tim and Jane's marriage, based solely on what you learn of them in the novel's first two chapters?
3. Discuss the importance of setting in the novel. How has living in an upscale suburb of New York shaped the Farnsworth family?
4. Describe the differences between Becka's relationship with her mother and with her father. How does the progression of Tim's illness change Becka?
5. How does Tim's work as an attorney shape his sense of himself as a husband, a father, and an individual? What does he enjoy about his work, and why is he good at it?
6. Do you understand Tim's affliction primarily as a metaphor or as a physical affliction? Why is it important for the doctors who attempt to treat him to know whether the disease is mental or physical?
7. Discuss the role of Frank Novovian in the novel.
8. Why do Tim and Jane move back into the city after Tim stops working as an attorney?
9. How does the final section of the novel differ from all previous sections? How would you characterize Tim's interactions with the natural world? Does the novel's ending provide a reconciliation of some kind, or simply a termination? How do Tim and Jane each deal with the process of grief, and grieving?

10. Why do you think the author uses fragments of the Emily Dickinson poem “After great pain a formal feeling comes” to open the different sections of the novel?