

# READING GROUP GUIDE

## AUGUST

ROMINA PAULA | Translated by Jennifer Croft

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1. While it's made clear that Andrea, Emilia's best friend, committed suicide, the details of the death are never fully explained. Why do you think the author avoids the details of Andrea's suicide? What effect does this lack of detail have on your reading of the book?
2. *August* could be considered a reverse coming-of-age story, in which the protagonist has stagnated as a young adult rather than grown up. When Emilia returns to her childhood home, this stagnation is especially apparent seen next to her ex-boyfriend's new life. Is there a certain time when people are usually expected to "come of age"? When you think about a "coming-of-age" story, what ideas or experiences come to mind?
3. When narrating events, Emilia freely switches between her inner thoughts and her outer actions. For example: while describing dinner with Andrea's parents, she falls into thoughts about Julian's children, then analyzes the cat's movements, and finally returns to say, "Anyway, so dinner with [Andrea's] parents was great" (57). As a reader, how did it feel to have so much unfiltered access to Emilia's thoughts? What was valuable and what was frustrating about this kind of narration?
4. In between diary entries about her daily life, Emilia summarizes the horrific murders that she hears about on the news. Why do you think the author included these entries (58, 89)? What does Emilia's tone when describing the murders reveal about her attitude toward death? How do these detailed summaries relate to Andrea's death, if at all?
5. *August* was originally written in Spanish by an Argentinian author. As a reader, did this affect your experience of reading the book? Does reading a book in translation differ from reading something originally written in English?
6. Emilia expresses varied forms of grief in response to Andrea's death, from staying in bed for days to crying over the song "Palm Tree." What role do these expressions play, both for Emilia and for the reader, in understanding this death? Ultimately, is there a conclusion to Emilia's grief? If her diary were to continue past the end of the novel, what do you think would be written on those pages?
7. Romina Paula is an actor, best known for her performances in independent Argentinian films, as well as a novelist. Do you think her work in film has any effect on her writing?

**ROMINA PAULA** is an Argentine playwright, novelist, director, and actor. Her two novels, *¿Vos me querés a mí?* and *Agosto*, have enjoyed extraordinary popularity and critical acclaim. This is her first book to be translated into English.

**JENNIFER CROFT** is a writer, translator, and critic. She is the recipient of Fulbright, PEN, and National Endowment for the Arts grants, as well as the Michael Henry Heim Prize.