

Book Club Kit Discussion Guide  
Clock Dance  
By Anne Tyler

**Author:**

Anne Tyler is the author of more than twenty novels. Her eleventh novel, *Breathing Lessons*, was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1988. She is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. She lives in Baltimore, Maryland. (*from the Publisher.*)

**Summary:**

Willa Drake has had three opportunities to start her life over: in 1967, as a schoolgirl whose mother has suddenly disappeared; in 1977, when considering a marriage proposal; and in 1997, as a young widow trying to hold her family together. So, she is surprised when in 2017 she is given one last chance to change everything, after receiving a startling phone call from a stranger. Without fully understanding why, she flies across the country to Baltimore to help a young woman she's never met. This impulsive decision, maybe the first one she's consciously made in her life, will lead Willa into uncharted territory—surrounded by eccentric neighbors who treat each other like family, she finds solace and fulfillment in unexpected places. A bewitching novel of hope and transformation, *Clock Dance* gives us Anne Tyler at the height of her powers. (*from the Publisher.*)

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Why do you think Anne Tyler began the story where she did? What do we learn about Willa by first meeting her as a little girl?
2. What do you make of the stranger on the plane? How would you respond in Willa's position? In Derek's? Have you ever had an experience that felt like this one? How did you want your family and friends to react?
3. Why do you think the cactus is so important to Willa? Are there symbols or landmarks in your own life that give you such powerful feelings?
4. If the book were instead focused on the life of another main character or Baltimore neighbor, which one would you most like to read about? What would their personal journey be?
5. Compare Willa's two marriages, as well as her feelings towards her sons. How has caring for different men shaped her life? How do you think these relationships affect the choices she makes in the second half of the book?
6. Now that you've finished, why do you think the author chose these particular moments in Willa's life to highlight? How do they make her the person she becomes, and where do you think she ends up?  
(*Questions issued by publisher.*)