



UNTAMED

**GLENNON
DOYLE**

READING GROUP GUIDE

PROLOGUE

- Glennon opens *Untamed* with the story of Tabitha, a caged cheetah she encounters on a family trip to a safari park. Glennon watches Tabitha stalk the periphery of the field where she's kept captive and imagines Tabitha's inner doubts, and her quick dismissal of those internal questions. Glennon imagines Tabitha saying to herself, "I should be grateful. I have a good enough life." What does the phrase "good enough life" mean to you? Do you ever find yourself silencing your own inner voice? How does Tabitha symbolize Glennon's desire and journey to become "untamed"?

PART I: CAGED

- When Abby tells Glennon's parents about her wish to marry their daughter, Glennon's mother says, "I have not seen my daughter this alive since she was ten years old." This prompts Glennon to ask: "*Where did my spark go at ten? How had I lost myself?*" She soon recognizes that at age ten, she began to let go of her true self to be the "good girl" society expected her to be. She writes, "I was wild until I was tamed by shame." How would you describe yourself as a young child? Does a particular age in your childhood stand out as pivotal turning point for you?
- After meeting and falling in love with Abby, Glennon acknowledges that creating a life with her was the first original idea she'd had, and the first decision she made as a free woman. It forced her to question her faith, friendships, her work, her sexuality—her entire life. Have you ever asked yourself what you truly want, versus what you might be conditioned to want? Are there things you have denied yourself because they don't "fit" with society's expectations? Do you believe it's possible to have what you really want despite a culture that might tell you otherwise?
- Glennon writes, "We forgot how to know when we learned how to please." Does this feel true to you? Do you ever find yourself ignoring your own instincts in favor of pleasing others? When? Why?
- Glennon describes her daughter Tish as "sensitive." What does that mean? Glennon writes that Tish's sensitivity is her "superpower." In what ways does her sensitivity make her powerful? In what ways could her sensitivity be perceived as inconvenient?

- Glennon writes that after she first discovered her husband’s infidelity, she did not know whether they should get a divorce or try to reconcile. When she says that she does not know what to do, the counselor at her children’s school tells her, “You need to figure out *how to know*.” What are the ways our culture tells us “to know” things? Do you trust those methods of knowing? How do you “figure out how to know”?

PART 2: KEYS

- Glennon describes building a life of her own by “resurrecting the very parts of [herself she] was trained to mistrust”: her emotions, her intuition, her imagination, her courage. According to Glennon, “those are who we are.” What makes you who you are?
- Glennon says that the first time she saw Abby, she heard three words: “*There She Is*.” At first Glennon thought those words had come to her from on high, but later she realizes they came from within. The voice she heard that day was her own, telling her “*Here I Am. I’m Taking Over Now*.” When has your inner voice allowed you to make important decisions? Describe how that felt.
- Glennon recalls that after her first AA meeting, a woman shared some invaluable wisdom with her: “Feelings are for feeling. All of them. Even the hard ones.” Glennon remembers being surprised. She writes, “I did not know that I was supposed to feel everything. I thought I was supposed to feel happy.” What feelings do you think we are supposed to feel? What feelings does our culture tell us are inconvenient or inappropriate? Do you find it difficult to let yourself “feel everything”?
- In “Know,” Glennon describes learning to connect to her inner Knowing. She says that each of us may call this Knowing something different, but that we all have this inner wisdom. She writes, “Why do we worry about what to call the Knowing, instead of sharing with each other how to call the Knowing”? How do you call your Knowing? What does connecting to it feel and look like to you?
- In “Imagine,” Glennon says that there is an “unseen order inside us” and that it is “the vision we carry in our imagination about a truer, more beautiful world.” Can you relate to this idea? Have you ever felt a “hopeful swelling” inside you “insisting that it was all meant to be more beautiful than this”? When? What did that feeling prompt you to do?

PART 3: FREE

- Glennon describes living with “the Ache” starting at age ten. For many years she believed the Ache was a reminder of death; the Ache says, “This ends, so leave.” Later, Glennon learns that the Ache might offer a different sort of wisdom. What sort of wisdom might that be? What benefits does Glennon experience from listening to the Ache?
- Glennon describes befriending Elizabeth Gilbert and discovering “a new friendship memo”—one with “no arbitrary rules or obligations or expectations.” Discuss the friendships in your life. In what ways do they operate by “arbitrary rules”? How do those rules serve you and your friends? If you were to rewrite the rules of some of your friendships, what would the new rules be?
- Glennon writes that “the end goal of every patriarchal culture is to convince women to control themselves.” What messages have you received from your culture—messages from parents, friends, childhood stories, advertisers, religious groups, and politicians—that try to convince you to control yourself?
- Glennon recognizes that her daughter Tish is very much like her, from the time Tish was a baby. Once she realizes that being pressured to act happy is what made her sick as a teenager and young adult, Glennon stops pushing Tish to “be pleasant.” Discuss how Glennon’s attitude about her role as Tish’s mother changes, from when she is “Caged” to when she is “Free.”
- Glennon recalls watching a nature survival show and learning about a Touch Tree, which is “a recognizable, strong, large tree that becomes the lost one’s home base.” What does this metaphor of a Touch Tree mean to you? When Glennon says, “I am not the woods. I am my own tree,” what does she mean?
- In “Boys,” Glennon describes some of the ways men are put “in cages” by cultural expectations. Do you agree with her assessment? What societal messages can you think of that promote particular conceptions of masculinity?
- Glennon describes her process of “unlearning the whitewashed version of American history” and beginning to “really listen and think more deeply about the experiences of people of color and other marginalized people” as

being similar to getting sober from addiction. What do you think about that comparison? In what ways does Glennon’s “waking up to white supremacy” reflect her path to sobriety?

- Glennon writes that “while choosing joy makes it easier for me to love myself and my life, it seems to make it harder for the world to love me” and she observes that we “proclaim: *Women are entitled to take their rightful place!* Then, when a woman does take her rightful place, our first reaction is: *She’s so . . . entitled.*” Do you agree with this observation? Why do you think it is often easier to like a woman when she is struggling, when she admits to being “a mess”? Why are we often discomfited by seeing a woman thrive?
- In “Streams,” Glennon describes starting Together Rising, the nonprofit charitable organization she founded with a commitment to serving families in need. Not long after becoming a philanthropist, Glennon became an activist. She writes that if we do not combine philanthropy with activism, we “risk becoming codependent with power.” What does Glennon mean by that? Can you list examples that prove this to be true?
- Glennon compares hard feelings—anger, heartbreak, and grief—to the delivery of a package containing new information about herself. She writes that the “reward for enduring hard feelings [is] finding [her] potential, [her] purpose, and [her] people.” What have you learned about yourself through hardship?
- Glennon says that heartbreak is “magic” and that “the thing that breaks your heart is the very thing you were born to heal.” What breaks your heart? What does that heartbreak reveal to you about meaningful work, activism, or opportunities for volunteering?
- In “Invaders,” Glennon makes a list of “easy buttons” and “reset buttons.” These are things she does when she is feeling anxious or depressed. The easy buttons (boozing, bingeing, shopping, etc.) allow her to abandon herself; the reset buttons (drinking a glass of water, taking a walk, meditating, etc.) return her to herself. What are your easy and reset buttons?
- Glennon says that “to live a life of her own, each woman must answer: What do I love? What makes me come alive? What is beauty to me and how do I take time to fill up with it?” Answer those questions for yourself; discuss what you love and how you prioritize it in your own life.

- In “Seconds,” Glennon describes “unlearning what [she] used to believe about control and love.” How and why do you think we often confuse control and love? Can you think of times you have tried to control people, or times you have felt others have tried to control you? In any of those situations, has that control been perceived as love? Why or why not?
- Glennon writes that the truth of her thirties was: “Stay on your mat, Glennon. The staying is making you.” And that the truth of her forties is: “I’m made.” What did she learn in that decade? Can you look at different periods of your own life and identify phases of growth? How did they change you? Do you feel “made”? Why or why not?
- Throughout *Untamed*, Glennon returns to the image of water and metaphors of fluidity. She says that “Love is a river;” “Faith is water. Sexuality is water;” and “You are the sea.” Why do you think this water imagery is so important to Glennon? What does she mean by “stay fluid”?
- Throughout *Untamed*, Glennon shares a story or an idea and then returns to it again later in the book, from a new perspective. For example, please see the chapters titled “Apples” and “Beach Houses;” “Directions” and “Boys;” and “Algorithms,” “Mirrors,” and “Eyes.” How does the way Glennon shares these anecdotes evolve? What new perspective does she bring to these stories when she returns to them?

ENHANCE YOUR BOOK CLUB

- In the opening pages of *Untamed*, Glennon asks herself, “Who was I before I became who the world told me to be?” Have everyone in your book club bring a photograph of themselves that they feel captures their original and wild self. When they share the photo with the group, have them explain what about the picture captures them looking “Untamed.”
- In the “Imagine” section of Part II, Glennon recalls asking women to write a letter describing “the truest, most beautiful” lives they could imagine. Have your book club take some time in silence during which you all write yourselves letters. In those letters, describe the truest, most beautiful lives/families/friendships/relationships you can imagine. Let your imagination go wild, do not edit yourself. What do you feel when you read the letter you’ve written?

- Untame your social media feed. Glennon has said that “the Untamed are those who quit spending their lives striving to be what they are ‘supposed’ to be and decide instead to just be who they already are.” She believes that Untaming doesn’t just happen, it is an ongoing, intentional process of clearing our own air so we can breathe again. Begin by clearing the air on your social media feed. To do this, unfollow the accounts that make you feel bad about yourself. Prioritize the accounts that make you feel brave and joyful. Keep only accounts in your social media feed that remind you that everything you need is already inside you.
- Glennon describes a snow globe she kept on a shelf in her childhood bedroom. She writes, “In its center stood a red dragon with sparkly scales.” She later says, “We’re like snow globes: We spend all our time, energy, words, and money creating a flurry . . . making sure the snow doesn’t settle so we never have to face the fiery truth inside us.” Do you identify with the idea of a dragon of truth inside of you? What do you do to “create a flurry” to distract yourself and others from that dragon inside? On one side of a piece of paper, list the ways you “create flurries” in your own life. On the other side of that same paper, can you list ways you let the snow settle? What does looking at those lists reveal to you?
- Get involved with Together Rising, the 501(c)(3) nonprofit that Glennon founded in 2012. Together Rising has raised more than \$25 million for people in need with a most frequent donation of \$25, proving that small gifts can change the world in revolutionary ways. Visit togetherrising.org to learn more, donate, or volunteer.