

Why I wrote *The Man on the Middle Floor*

I have four children. My first, Philippa, was born when I was still twenty-one, and by the time I was twenty-five I had three daughters under the age of three. I absolutely love motherhood, nurturing and babies. This book was never supposed to be the first book I wrote; instead I was going to write a thriller that was part memoir and part fiction based around my childhood.

Then I had my fourth child, who is now nineteen, and I realised as he grew up what a massive shift had taken place in the twelve years since my last daughter was born. Political correctness had invaded every corner of parenting and childhood. Academic exams started almost as soon as the toddler stage was over. There was homework and no time for play, children were much more likely to have been in nurseries very early and not at home.

These are all sudden and rapid changes, and I have asked myself often how schools can have our children for such long periods and then let them emerge with no social skills not knowing the difference between an oak tree and a willow tree, or how to manage money, or how to change a car wheel, while the government changes targets and literacy levels compulsively.

All these are subjects for discussion, but, distilled down, are the questions that were most pertinent and which

informed *The Man on the Middle Floor*, gleaned from the hundreds of children and young people I have had in my home and got to know. Why are they so much unhappier, and why is there such a huge increase in disconnection? This generation has the highest suicide rates, the highest depression rates, and the number of children on the autistic spectrum has increased dramatically.

Society, attachment, love and kindness are in my opinion what define us as human beings. Compassion and intelligence, using our judgement and being able to express opinions without being shouted down, are vital. *The Man on the Middle Floor* asks why we are so lost when we have so many tools for social interaction these days? Why the increase in solitude? Where are we going, and should we turn back before it's too late?

Book Club Questions

1. Do you think that the number of single-person households has increased the breakdown in relationships?
2. Do you think that Nick's actions are as a result of his Asperger's or brought about by society's inability to deal with people on the autistic spectrum adequately? Nature or nurture?
3. Do you think that political correctness in government or in the police is positive or negative?
4. Bearing in mind that even in the Natural Kingdom animals still have a need to bond with a primary carer, should we be thinking again about how we treat our children during infancy and childhood?
5. While writing *The Man on the Middle Floor* I was encouraged at several stages to remove characters that were controversial but exist within society. Do you enjoy reading controversial characters in books? Why?
6. Karen puts her work before her children in a very extreme way. Do you believe that there is always a choice for women ... it is possible to have it all?
7. Karen's daughter fulfils an adult role of carer at a very young age. Do you think there should be provisions to help children in this position, and, if so, what?
8. Do you think that the breakdown of face-to-face interactions such as going to church, going to the shops,

Women's Institutes, Working Men's Clubs and so on has contributed to the general feeling of solitude?

9. Do you think that the rapid increase in the rate of autism can be attributed to the following: the food chain, changes in society, social media and television, lack of face-to-face interaction. If none of these, then what do you think?
10. Do you think that we are moving towards a new kind of societal structure and should forget about old-fashioned ways of doing things and look forward?

About the Author



Elizabeth Moore lives in South London with her South African husband, son Tommy, two Labradors, and daughters who come and go when they are not singing, diving or travelling. Her friends call her Lizzy and she spends her time with her family, eating out with friends and writing about it, and plotting out novels. She loves politics, is fascinated by people's motivation in acts good and wicked, and is always about to turn into a domestic goddess who bakes and is mindful. She has two more novels and a Young Adult novella in the pipeline, and writes for a wide range of magazines and national newspapers. She loves hearing if you have enjoyed her writing...or not. Reach her at elizabethsmoore.com, and keep up with appearances and thoughts in her newsletter.