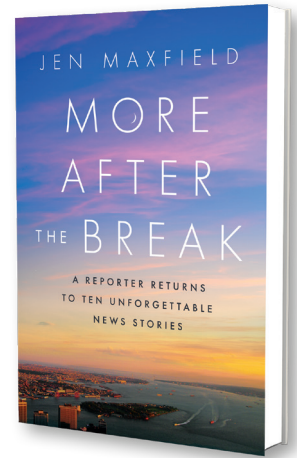


JEN MAXFIELD
MORE AFTER THE BREAK
A REPORTER RETURNS TO TEN
UNFORGETTABLE NEWS STORIES

BOOK CLUB QUESTIONS



GENERAL:

Is there a local news story you remember watching or reading that has stuck with you?

Did *More After the Break* change your perception of the news and how journalists report stories?

Which “behind the scenes” aspect of TV news surprised you the most? What did you learn about what it means to be a broadcast journalist?

Was there one chapter or one person who you connected with most? What was it about that person or their experience that resonated with you?

Did reading *More After the Break* inspire you to want to reconnect with someone in your life—return to one of your own unforgettable stories?

INTRODUCTION “THE DOOR KNOCK”

Maxfield writes, “We dip our toes in the pool of your grief, but never jump in for fear of drowning.” What does this mean to you?

Most TV news stories are under two minutes long. How did reading thirty pages on each of these stories alter your perspective and understanding?

Before reading this book, were you aware that journalists like Jen Maxfield and Gary Tuchman continued to keep in touch with the subjects of their stories for years after the stories aired on the news? What do you think the benefits of that relationship are?

CHAPTER 1 "ANGEL ON THE FERRY"

While Paul is the person who suffered the physical injury, Kerry seems to have the most lingering pain. Did you feel this chapter spoke to the invisible suffering of emotional trauma?

How did the letters that Paul received from viewers link to the larger theme of community throughout the book?

Do you think that being cast as the "hero" contributed to Kerry's struggle after the ferry crash?

Paul Esposito says he believes "everything happens for a reason." Do you agree?

CHAPTER 2 "THE BIG ONE"

Are you surprised that the Hurricane Katrina survivors remembered being interviewed by Jen more than fifteen years prior? What does this say about the power of brief interactions?

How was the way Jen covered the news outside her community in Mississippi different than her reporting in New Jersey and New York?

Many early readers found the description of the challenge of finding a bathroom on assignment very relatable. What aspects of severe weather coverage did you find surprising or interesting?

Jen writes about feeling guilty after leaving Johnny Bravo in his Red Cross tent in Staten Island and not offering to pay for his hotel or give him cash. Can you relate to the tension of abiding by the ethics of not paying people for news interviews, but feeling the human instinct to help?

The help poured in from the community for the Borelli family after their story about their freezing cold aired. But what about all of the other families who needed help? Is choosing one family or another to feature on the news inherently unfair? (This question can also be linked to the medical struggle of Yarelis Bonilla in Chapter 4).

CHAPTER 3 "FRIDAY NIGHT"

Why do you think Maxfield was so taken aback by how Corrine received her at her home?

Did the close relationship between Corrine and Tiffany remind you of someone in your own life who is your "person"? Someone you can spend hours with and the time flies, someone who

you've never fought with about anything more serious than a tube of mascara?
The two groups of friends out on Friday night have their stories proceeding on similar timelines.
Where did their nights out with friends diverge?

Did you think either Brian or anyone who knew about the hit-and-run ever felt regret?

Corrine was the first person Maxfield called to participate in the book, and the first chapter that was written. Why do you think this was?

CHAPTER 4: "THE LONG WAY HOME"

If you had to choose one person who was responsible for saving Yarelis' life, who would it be?

Maxfield writes about a local newspaper and the major cuts it endured in the last decade. Have you seen a decline in local news coverage in your own community? Do you still subscribe to and read your local newspaper?

Yarelis got the medical help she needed after her story aired. But what about all of the other people who are suffering? Is choosing one person or another to feature on the news inherently unfair? (This question can also be linked to the story of the Borelli family in Chapter 2).

Do you think reporting stories on Zoom— and watching them— is less effective than stories reported in person?

Isabella de la Houssaye distinguishes between hope and joy, saying that "hope seems to relate to the future, and joy comes in the present moment." How did this advice from a woman with Stage 4 lung cancer affect you?

Maxfield compares Yarelis' and Isabella's cancer journeys at the end of the chapter. Do you think it's fair to draw these distinctions, or is everyone's medical story unique?

CHAPTER 5 "A DAUGHTER'S LOVE"

Why do you think Tamika felt it was so important to get her story in the public eye, so soon after being seriously injured?

Do you think that Maxfield should have interviewed Tamika from her hospital bed while she was still in intensive care? Did you support her decision to sneak an iPad into the hospital to do it?

Tamika and her mother have a complicated relationship. Did this recall any relationships in your life?

Why do you think Maxfield saved the Christmas card from Joyce Brink for more than two decades? What was it about receiving her note that was so impactful?

Maxfield writes that "Tamika will never know how many people she saved." How does this relate to the larger theme of community throughout the book?

CHAPTER 6 "RACING AGAINST TIME"

Why do you think Maxfield started this chapter by talking about Darren's physical transformation through his weight loss?

Did you find it interesting that Maxfield never calls first for a big interview, but prefers to arrive unannounced and knock on a family's door? She writes, "my temporary lack of etiquette allows me to make the request, and their manners frequently make it impossible to say no."

Maxfield writes in this chapter about "reaching an emotional limit" on interviews with grieving families, and her coping mechanisms over the years. How do you think you would balance thousands of interviews with your own mental health?

Why did Maxfield stay with Jimmy Drake until the other news crews arrived, even though she had enough information for her news story that night?

Darren's cousin Kristen says that she likes being asked about him, because talking about him helps keep his memory alive. Is this how you feel about people asking you about your relatives who have passed?

Did reading about 9/11 family members coming to comfort the Drakes at Darren's wake relate to the larger theme of community throughout the book?

Maxfield posts this question at the end of Chapter 6: "If I can mine all of this information online, why am I still knocking on doors and intruding on a family's grief? Why not report the story from my computer and leave the family alone?" Did you feel she adequately answered this question?

CHAPTER 7 “PARAMUS STRONG”

Did you relate to Maxfield— as a mom— panicking on the bridge when she thought her own children might have been impacted by the news story she was rushing off to cover?

Maxfield writes, “despite the reality that the news event we are heading toward will likely be a tragedy for someone’s family, there is a mood of anticipation: the challenge that awaits.” Is this the tension for both reporters and viewers when it comes to breaking news?

The Good Samaritans referred to people taking cell phone video soon after the bus crash as “voyeurs.” Do you see any value in people recording video of breaking news scenes?

Why do you think “the microphone and camera act as a strange sort of magnet in times of crisis”?

Zaina spoke for 12 seconds in Maxfield’s initial news story, and within a year had spoken before Congress to advocate for stronger bus safety rules. What does this tell you about the long term impact of local news coverage, and about Zaina’s personal journey?

Maxfield writes about returning home to her young children after a day covering the funeral of a child. Did you find it interesting to consider how journalists balance their personal and professional lives?

CHAPTER 8 “FREE AT LAST”

The chapters in *More After the Break* were arranged in chronological order, except for Chapter 8. Did you understand why Maxfield and her editor put this chapter last?

Maxfield writes that she still feels like “she’s been punched in the stomach” every time she reads Chris’ letter about the invasive cell search. How did you feel reading it?

Chris scolded Maxfield and her documentary partners for “intruding into his personal life without his permission.” What important lesson do you think Maxfield learned (or should have learned) from his letter?

Terrence Stevens says, “it’s amazing how the world changes.” In what ways do you think the world has changed for nonviolent drug offenders? In what ways do you think reform is still needed?

Maxfield writes that “Much of the wisdom I have gained over these last two decades is through trial and error, mistakes and missteps.” Do you feel this book highlights that evolution?

What is Maxfield trying to say when she writes of reporting the news, “the information may flow through us, but we are not a neutral medium?” Is this how you perceive journalists?

What does Maxfield mean when she writes, “Human being first. Journalist second.”

CONCLUSION “THE DOOR KNOCK, REVISITED”

What did it mean for Maxfield to go “out of her comfort zone” to write *More After the Break*. What takes you out of your comfort zone?

How did your feelings about “The Door Knock” change between the introduction and conclusion of the book?

Do you think Maxfield generally heightened or mitigated a family’s pain?

Maxfield writes that part of her inspiration to return to people and their stories was to investigate whether she owed them an apology. To whom do you think she owed an apology?

Maxfield writes about how covering thousands of stories inspired her to help other people in her community. Did reading *More After the Break* inspire you to take action in your community?

THANK YOU FOR READING *MORE AFTER THE BREAK* BY JEN MAXFIELD.
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