



Discussion Questions

Champagne Rules

by Susan Lyons

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Thanks so much for reading *Champagne Rules*. I hope you enjoyed it, and I'd love to hear from you. I'm happy to provide bookmarks and autographed bookplates; just send me your name and address. Please visit my website for info on other titles, insights into how each book came about, excerpts, a monthly contest, and other good stuff.

Now settle back, kick off your shoes, and make sure you've got a nice glass of wine, a Margarita, a latté or a cup of tea, and let's reflect on the book.

1. *A couple of warm-up questions.* Which of the four girls do you most identify with, and why? What was your favorite scene in the book, and why?
2. *Friends.* One of the themes of the book is female friendship and support. Do you have friends like the Awesome Foursome in your life? When should you listen to a friend, when should you politely agree to disagree, and when should you pull away from the friendship? Which of the Foursome would you choose first as a friend, and why?
3. *The man from the past.* Suzanne goes hunting for the man from her past. Do you think that's a good thing to do, or should the past be left behind? Is there anyone in your past you'd like to track down? If so, why haven't you done it?
4. *The ideal man.* Suzanne has a very clear idea of the kind of man she wants: a modern-day version of Ward Cleaver from "Leave It To Beaver." What kind of man are you looking for? What qualities are most important to you? Do you think it's a good or a bad idea to have a checklist in your head? – e.g., he must be tall and handsome, have a good job, have a great sense of humor, bring me flowers "just because," etc.?
5. *Priorities in life.* When Suzanne and Jaxon get together, they have different priorities in life. Suzanne's looking down the road for marriage and kids as well as a meaningful career. Jaxon's priority is building a high-powered career as quickly as he can. He's tried marriage and failed, and doesn't believe he can handle both a serious relationship and a demanding career. What are your priorities in life? Can a person succeed at both a career and marriage/family? If you're like Suzanne and want both a family life and a career, how are you going about achieving that? If you started to date a man like Jaxon, would you support him in his drive to get ahead, would you dump him, or would you try to get him to change? If you'd try to get him to change, how would you go about that? And do you believe that anyone ever really changes? What about Jaxon? At the end of the book, he's stepping out on a new path. Is he going to stick to it?
6. *Dating long distance.* Suzanne and Jaxon have a long-distance relationship. What are the disadvantages to that kind of relationship? Can you see any advantages? If you were involved in a relationship like that, what kinds of things would you do to maintain and build your connection? Would you want a time limit? – e.g., "I'm willing to do this for six months, but after that we have to decide if we're going to be together." What if the guy asked you to move to his city? Could you imagine doing that? If you did, what would you want from him in return? Or would you want him to move to your city? If he did, might that put too much pressure on you? – e.g., He gave up so much for you, now you feel obliged to move in together or get engaged even if you're not ready.

7. *The divorced man.* How do you feel about getting involved with a man who's divorced? He tried it once and failed, so does that make him a bad risk? What things might he say or do that would either reassure you or scare you off? Jaxon is close to his ex-wife, and his ex-wife is close to his mom. How would you feel about that, if you were his girlfriend? When a relationship's over, should the couple call it quits or stay friends?
8. *Two different colors.* Suzanne and Jaxon are involved in an interracial relationship. How do you feel about that? Have you ever been in that kind of relationship yourself? If so, in what ways was your experience similar to theirs, and in what ways did it differ? Were your parents and friends as understanding? Did anyone pressure you to date within your own race? What are the advantages and disadvantages of an interracial relationship in today's society?
9. *The immigrant kid.* Jaxon's mom brought him from Jamaica to the States when he was a boy, because she wanted him to have better opportunities. She's worked very hard to give him a good life, and he's bought into the American Dream. Or has he? Does his view of the American Dream match up with yours, or does he take it to an unhealthy extreme? If he does, do you think that's often typical of immigrant or first-generation kids? Do they have more pressure on them to succeed?
10. *Parents and kids.* How far should a parent go, in providing for their child? Jaxon's mom makes lots of sacrifices for her only child. Could you see yourself doing that? The two of them are close, but Jaxon's been so busy at work that he hasn't spent a lot of time with her. Do you think she understands? Would you, if he was your son? And then there's Suzanne, living just across the back yard from her parents and having Sunday dinner with her folks each week. Is that too close a relationship? Do you think she's really grown up, or is she scared to separate herself from her family? What will happen if Suzanne and Jaxon continue with their relationship? One of them's going to have to move, and that will take them away from their family. How do you see that working out? And how about you? Are you close to your family? Do you live in the same city? Do you see them as often as you'd like, or more than you really want to? If you're married, did your relationship with your family change after marriage? If you're single and would like to marry, how do you see your future partner fitting in with your family?
11. *Work pressures.* There's a point where Jaxon's job depends on him doing something that may not, strictly speaking, be unethical, but that gives him a moral dilemma. What would you do if you were in his position? Have you ever faced a similar situation? If your boss tells you to do something, should you do it, or is there a point where you'd draw the line?
12. *Sex and only sex.* Can any couple keep their relationship to "just sex," without things getting more complicated? Have you ever tried to do it, and how did that work out? Why do Suzanne's and Jaxon's best-laid plans to stick with the Champagne Rules end up foundering? At what point did you think, "Ah ha, they're never going to manage to keep their own rules"?
13. *Pushing the boundaries with sex.* Suzanne and Jaxon push the boundaries by making love in public and semi-public places. Have you ever done anything like that? Is it arousing or scary, or both? They also use cyber sex and phone sex to keep their long distance relationship spicy. Have you ever tried those? Does the idea appeal to you or turn you off, and why? How far will you push the boundaries, and in what ways? And why is that fun for you? Which sex scene in the book was your favorite, and why?
14. *And more sex!* Yes, of course I had to ask this question: What's the best sex you ever had? Are you still with that person? If not, what do you think would happen if you saw them again?
15. *The book.* The publisher calls *Champagne Rules* erotic romance. "Erotic" refers to the fact that sex is a pretty big part of the book, and the sex scenes are fairly detailed and explicit. "Romance" means the book is about the development of a romantic relationship. Of course the book is also about Suzanne's and Jaxon's personal growth, the strength of family and the joy of friendship. And there's a significant dollop of humor mixed in. How did the mix of these components work for you? Would you have liked more or less of any of them?

I'd love to hear your thoughts on some of these questions and issues!