



# THE ELISSAS

*Three Girls, One Fate,  
and the Deadly  
Secrets of Suburbia*

**SAMANTHA LEACH**

## *Book Club Kit*

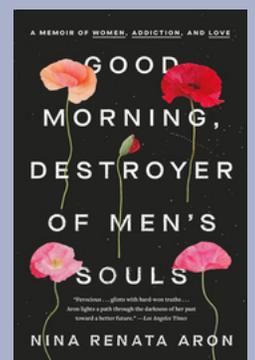
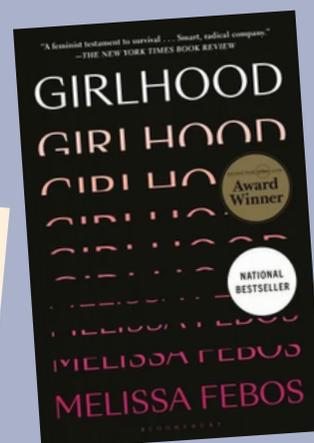
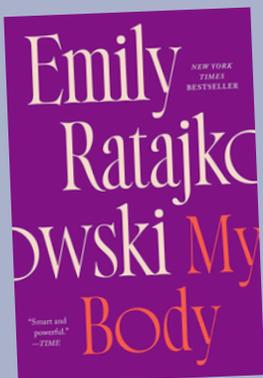
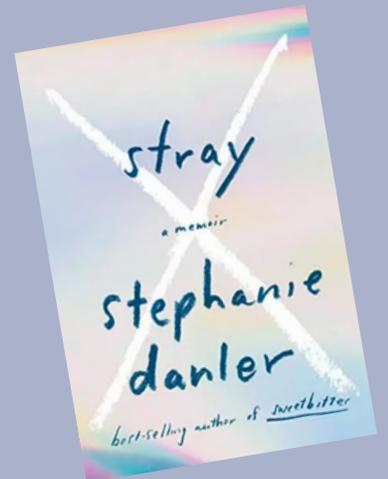
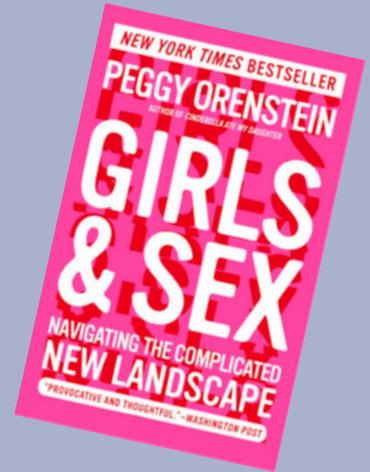
# Book Club Questions

1. When we first meet Leach and Elissa, they are rebellious young pre-teens beginning to experiment with drugs and alcohol. **Were you or others you knew defiant as teens? How did the adults around handle or react to this?**
2. Throughout the book, Leach discusses shame—how it manifested in each of the Elissas, how the Troubled Teen Industry employs it, and even grappling with it herself. **Why does Leach find shame to be such a powerful force? Is she making the case that its effects are more dangerous to girls and women? If yes, why?**
3. Leach and Elissa, close as they were, ended up taking very different paths in life. She mentions in the book several instances in which she chose to avoid potentially negative situations while Elissa seemed drawn to them. **Why do you think Leach went one way and Elissa went the other?**
4. Having developed relationships with the parents and family, **Leach writes, “I’ve come to believe they were just as much victims of the Troubled Teen Industry as their daughters were.” Do you agree with her conclusion? Why?**
5. Considering what we know about the consequences of "Troubled Teen" schools on mental health, **do you think there is ever a scenario where the actions of these schools are warranted?**
6. At the time the Elissas were growing up, young women were enthralled by Paris Hilton, Nicole Richie, Kim Kardashian, Mischa Barton and others who were known mostly for a combination of being wealthy, thin, and sexually desirable. **Do you think the cultural obsession with things like leaked sex tapes and images of waif-ish celebrity women had a specific impact on the self-esteem of women their age?**
7. Leach often expresses the ways in which her grief was unwieldy — at different points coupled with jealousy, anxiety, and profoundly compounded by social media. **How do you think social media affects the ways in which we grieve and share our grief with others?**
8. Throughout The Elissas we see Leach learn first-hand how difficult it can be to establish and keep boundaries that are important to us, even in friendships. **Have you ever established boundaries with friends?**

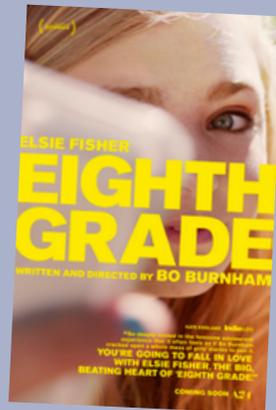
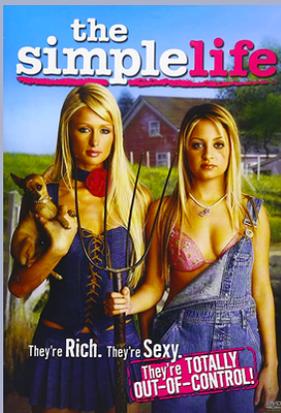
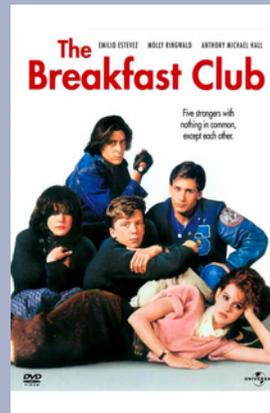
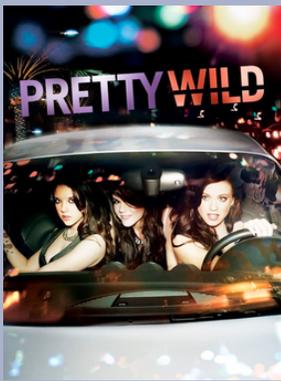
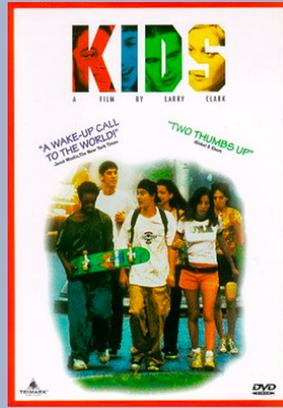
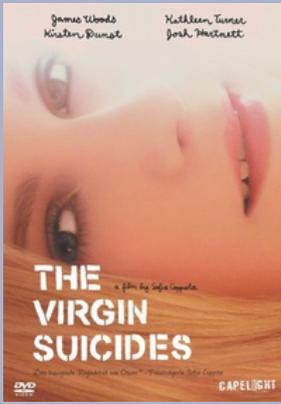


# Supplemental Reading

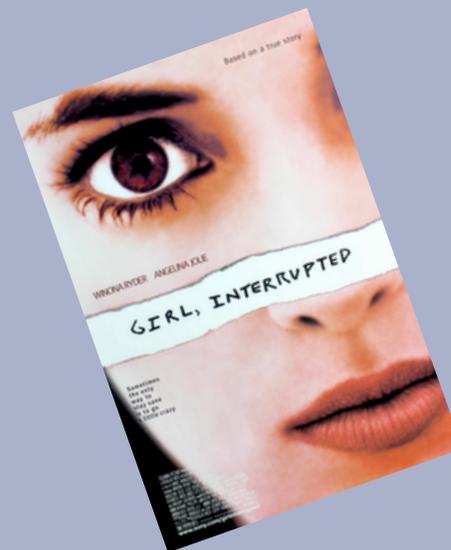
- *The Empathy Exams* by Leslie Jamison
- *Drinking: A Love Story* by Caroline Knapp
- *Appetites* by Caroline Knapp
- *Help At Any Cost* by Maia Szalavitz
- *Minor Feelings* by Cathy Park Hong
- *Girls & Sex* by Peggy Orenstein
- *Untangled* by Lisa Damour
- *The Road to Whatever* by Elliott Currie
- *Getting Wrecked* by Kimberly Sue
- *Girlhood* by Melissa Febos
- *We Keep The Dead Close* by Becky Cooper
- *Stay True* by Hua Hsu
- *My Body* by Emily Ratajkowski
- *Stray* by Stephanie Danler
- *Good Morning, Destroyer of Men's Souls* by Nina Renata Aron
- *Edie* by Jean Stein



# Watch List



- The Virgin Suicides (1999)
- Eighth Grade (2018)
- Kids (1995)
- Girl, Interrupted (1999)
- Beautiful Boy (2018)
- The Breakfast Club (1985)
- Candy (2006)
- Factory Girl (2006)
- The Simple Life (2003-2007)
- The Rachel Zoe Project (2008-2013)
- Pretty Wild (2010)
- The O.C. (2003-2007)



# Playlist

## PODCASTS

- The C-Word
  - Episode: Lindsay Lohan pt 1 and 2
- Sounds Like A Cult
  - Episode: The Cult of The Troubled Teen Industry
- Slate's ICYMI
  - Episode: The TikTokers Taking Down the Troubled Teen Industry
- Trapped In Treatment
- Sent Away



## SONGS

- Champagne Supernova by Matt Pond PA
- Crooked Teeth by Death Cab for Cutie
- MakeDamnSure by Taking Back Sunday
- Fade Into You by Mazzy Star
- Femme Fatale by the Velvet Underground
- Forever Young by Youth Group
- For the Widows in Paradise, for the Fatherless in Ypsilanti by Sufjan Stevens
- Hold Me Down by Motion City Soundtrack
- Born to Die by Lana Del Rey
- L.G. FUAD by Motion City Soundtrack
- Maybe I'm Amazed by Jem
- Paint The Silence by South
- Playground Love by Air
- Across the Universe by Fiona Apple
- Hide & Seek by Imogen Heap

