



BOOK CLUB KIT

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Dearest Reader,

A question I'm often asked about this novel is whether private women's clubs like The Queen Annes exist. They do! In fact, The Annes are inspired by a women's society in my town that was founded in 1912. A gentler, more inclusive version of the society I fictionalized, the members of the Isabella Eldridge Club (as my town's group is called) put on plays throughout the year, they invite speakers to educate the members on a variety of topics, and at meetings, they delegate hostessing tasks with care. One woman serves the coffee, adding cream and sugar to each lady's preference; another presides over the tea station; someone commandeers the bubbly; and a fourth woman collects dues.

If you're reading this, you too are in a social club of great prestige and value. To be in a book club is to be in a sorority of readers. The book that the group chooses becomes a vehicle for crucial conversations about culture, family life, the Environment, and other topics, and even if the members don't agree on the book itself, they agree about the act of reading, which brings us all together.

Speaking of togetherness: the attached devil's egg recipe was handed down to me by my Tennessee-born grandmother, Gabby, who loved to socialize but despised cooking, and the Sunrise is a nod to the sweet tea I can't get enough of when I visit my family in the South. Regardless of what one prepares to eat or drink at book meetings, the most important offering is good conversation. I hope my latest novel stirs discussion around competing priorities; the way the American dream has shifted over the last decade; the pros and cons of HOAs; whether or not one can have too many curling irons; the ability of a swimming pool to boost a child's popularity; and what happens when one's long-term partner or spouse makes a huge life change that nobody saw coming.

Enjoy the read. Enjoy each other.

With gratitude,
Courtney



READERS GROUP GUIDE

1. “Have you ever considered the long-term impacts of what you’re doing? Of telling people that what they have is not enough?” Why do you think Daniel’s words have such a profound effect on Alan? Does Alan fully embrace a “less is more” mentality by the book’s end?
2. Vivian’s personal history plays a large role in the decisions she makes and compulsions she demonstrates throughout the book. Do you think her behavior is warranted based on what we know of her past?
3. In their current form, do the Queen Annes represent female empowerment and support, reinforce older clichés and oppress the women in and around the organization, or some combination of both?
4. If Alan had been anyone else, would that have changed how his behavior was received? Do you think there’s a certain level of privilege built into his behavior?
5. Throughout the novel, a character named Fred keeps reappearing to sell wares and sow discord in the neighborhood group chat. Did you have an idea of who Fred was before we officially learned their identity? What do you think Fred's motivation was for their actions online and off?
6. Vivian wants a swimming pool so that Bailey and Sunny will fit in better with their peers. She buys Sunny the most expensive and popular helmet for her horseback riding and makes sure Bailey attends the most exclusive school. Can you understand why she prioritizes what she does for her daughters?
7. Ultimately, this is a book about what really matters at the end of the day: not things, but people. In what small ways throughout the novel did you see the Anderson family’s relationships with each other grow?
8. How did you feel about the ending? What do you think is next for the Andersons?
9. Do you think "the American Dream" is achievable? If so, did the Andersons ever reach it at any point in the novel?

THE SUNRISE

Whitby's favorite beverage is also a summer classic.
For an extra kick for your book club, add bourbon.

Serves 4-6

Ingredients:

6 cups brewed black tea, preferably
oolong

2.5 cups freshly squeezed orange juice

1 cup good quality bourbon like Four
Roses (optional)

4 thinly sliced orange wheels

4 sprigs mint or basil

Directions:

Brew tea ahead of time according to
directions and set aside to cool.

Stir cooled black tea, freshly squeezed orange
juice, and bourbon (if using) together.

Serve over ice in highball glasses; garnish with
mint (or basil) and a sliced orange wheel.



COURTNEY MAUM'S

CURRIED DEVEILED EGGS

These are deviled eggs with a subtle twist, a natural for any book club meeting but perhaps a tad outré for a Queen Annes cocktail party. You decide.

Serves 4

Ingredients:

6 large eggs

½ cup celery, finely diced

Splash of white vinegar or lemon juice, or to taste

1 1/2 teaspoons curry powder, or to taste

1 tablespoon mayonnaise

1 teaspoon canola oil

Salt and pepper to taste

Dill

Bacon bits (optional)

Directions:

1. Put eggs in a saucepan and cover with cold water. Salt. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer for 10-12 minutes. Drain and cool in an ice bath. Once cool, peel hard-boiled eggs. Slice eggs in half lengthwise and scoop out yolks.
2. Mash yolks with celery, vinegar or lemon juice, curry powder, mayonnaise, canola oil, salt, and pepper.
3. Carefully put egg yolk mixture back into egg whites but do not pack it. When ready to serve, garnish with dill and/or bacon bits.



PLAYLIST



Flying Lizards, Money
Pulp, Common People
Ariana Grande, 7 Rings
The Clash, Lost in the Supermarket
Harper Valley PTA, Dolly Parton
Eddie Vedder, Society
Bob Dylan, The Times They Are A-Changin'
Fired, Ben Folds
Ramones, The Job That Ate My Brain
ABBA, Money, Money, Money
Joni Mitchell, Big Yellow Taxi
Malvina Reynolds, Little Boxes
Billy Joel, Uptown Girl
Eddie Vedder, Guaranteed
Creedence Clearwater Revival, Fortunate Son
Dire Straits, Money for Nothing
Bob Dylan, Maggie's Farm
Beatles, Can't Buy Me Love
Hall and Oates, Rich Girl
Rick James, Money Talks
Taylor Swift, Champagne Problems
Rolling Stones, I Can't Get No Satisfaction
Gil Scott-Heron, The Revolution Will Not Be Televised
Mama Cass, Make Your Own Kind of Music

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