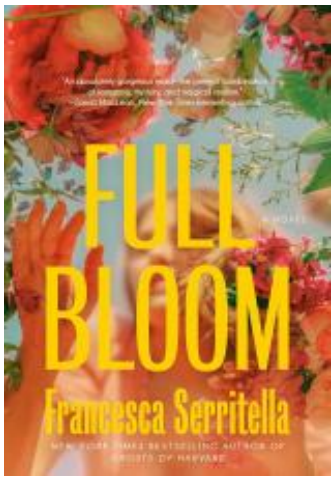
ReadingGroupGuides
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Full Bloom

by Francesca Serritella



About the Book

The power to be seen. The power to be heard. The power to be adored.

A woman's life is forever changed by a mysterious perfume in this stunning novel about ambition and untapped desire from the *New York Times* bestselling author of GHOSTS OF HARVARD.

Reeling from a breakup and overlooked at her job as a lighting designer, Iris Sunnegren finds herself stuck, disconnected and lonely in crowded New York City. Her wealthy friends are married and having babies, while she?s trying to pay for freezing her eggs. And the future she longs for feels out of reach.

Then a mysterious neighbor, an older Frenchwoman, makes her a gift: a bespoke perfume.

One spritz, a dab behind the ears, and Iris feels like a different woman. Suddenly, she is the object of every man?s desire, and she can satisfy her own hungers for sex, love and ambition. She can cast off her inhibitions and use her newfound allure to dazzle the high-profile client, attract a man who excites her like no other, and access all the rarefied spaces that once excluded her. Invigorated by the perfume, Iris embodies her maximum power --- a flower fully bloomed.

But there is danger in connecting to our primal emotions. Scent awakens buried memories, and nightmares of the childhood house fire she barely survived return to haunt her. As Iris ventures deeper into the glamorous and male-dominated worlds of New York real estate, dimly lit steakhouses, and beachfront mansions in the Hamptons, she finds herself getting closer to unspeakable truths --- about the people she trusted, about the people she loved, and about the new circle of power-players that invited her in.

A sensual and seductive novel set among the upper echelons of New York City, FULL BLOOM is at once a poignant story of becoming and a riveting mystery that asks: Who are you without your inhibitions? Does being wanted get what you want, or will you be devoured by desire?

Discussion Guide

1. What are the key themes explored in the novel? Which resonated the most deeply with you, and why?

2. Do you think the perfume was really magic, or did it primarily unlock something within Iris? Do you have a fragrance or beauty ritual that makes you feel transformed?

3. The perfume helps Iris connect to her body and primal instincts. Have you ever had a gut feeling where your body knew something before your brain could articulate it? Do you find you are better served acting on instinct or thinking things through?

4. Talk about Iris? Manhattan life --- its allure, its challenges, and what it means to be young and single and striving. How is New York City a character in and of itself in FULL BLOOM?

5. Iris decides to freeze her eggs in the novel, despite the cost and challenges, both physical and emotional. What do you think about her choice and the choice many young women make to do this?

6. Madame Rapacine explains that a flower?s potency is strongest on the ?cusp of decay,? to which Iris replies, ?Decay needs a rebrand.? Rapacine defies all expectations of a woman her age. Is this a trick of her perfume alchemy or her state of mind? Is age nothing but a number?

7. Rapacine implores Iris to use the perfume to get everything she wants out of life, to which Iris replies, ?I?d settle for just getting what I deserve.? Rapacine counters they?re one and the same: ?You deserve everything you want.? Do you think this is true in general? Are women too quick to cut down their own desires and ambition, or is compromise necessary to achieve happiness?

8. Do you agree with Iris? observation of Lindsay that ?all the power of youth and beauty was good for a handbag, nothing more?? How real or overstated is ?pretty privilege? in society? Do you think being attractive to men is a superpower for some women or a liability?

9. What are the ethical implications of Iris using the perfume to achieve her desires? At work? Socially? Did the perfume?s temptation change the ethics of Mike?s culpability when he kissed her without consent?

10. How do Iris? relationships with her wealthy friends, and with wealth in general, evolve throughout the story? How does social class factor in the novel? Is money its own perfume?

11. What role do memories of the house fire play in Iris? journey? Although her memory was partially repressed, were there signs that her body remembered the true trauma she endured before it was revealed?

12. Gabe and Iris bond over their difficult childhoods and the false narratives they had to dispel, but their adult coping

mechanisms are quite different. Do you think Gabe is a good partner for Iris? How do they help each other grow? Would you like to see them get back together someday?

13. How does Iris? character develop from the beginning to the end of the novel? How does her trauma shape her motivations? How does she seek, fumble and achieve stability and emotional security? Does her path toward healing resonate with you? If so, how?

14. What did you think of the book?s ending? What are your main takeaways from FULL BLOOM?

Author Bio

Francesca Serritella is the *New York Times* and *USA Today* bestselling author of two novels: FULL BLOOM and GHOSTS OF HARVARD. GHOSTS OF HARVARD was nominated for Best First Novel by International Thriller Writers. She also co-authored a nine-book series of essay collections with her mother, author Lisa Scottoline, based on their Sunday column in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. She graduated cum laude from Harvard University, where she won multiple awards for her fiction, including the Thomas T. Hoopes Prize. She lives in New York City with her 18-year-old cat and her new puppy.

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