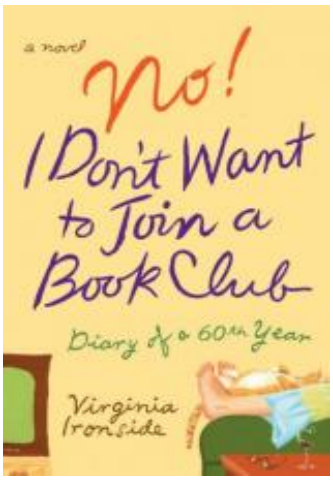
No! I Don't Want to Join a Book Club

by Virginia Ironside



About the Book

A delightful novel about letting go of youth and embracing the sassy curmudgeon within.

Don't harass her about parasailing or taking Italian language courses. Forget about suggesting she join a gym. Marie Sharp may be a little creaky in the bones as she heads toward the big 6-0, but she's fine with it. She would rather do without all the moving-to-Florida-bicycling-across-Mongolia-for-the-hell-of-it hoopla that her friends insist upon. She's already led an exciting life: She came of age in the 1960s, after all. Now, with both a new grandchild and a new man on the horizon, all she wants to do is make the most of what she considers the most interesting stage of her life. In this wonderfully astute novel based on the author's own experiences, **No! I Don't Want to Join a Book Club** is the funny --- and often poignant --- fictionalized diary of an older woman? a decade or two past her prime and content to leave it all behind her. So don't tell her to take a gourmet cooking class, and whatever you do, don't you dare tell her to join a book club. Fresh and truly unique, moving gracefully on in years has never been more hilarious than in this forthright grandma's take on the "third phase" of life.

Discussion Guide

1. Marie talks about ?longing to feel sixty? (p. 7). Does she really want this?and what does feeling one?s age mean anyway?

2. In what ways does Marie defy popular notions of older people, especially older women? In what ways does she (wittingly or unwittingly) conform to them?

3. What role do Hughie and James play in Marie?s life? What does her relationship with them as a couple and with Hughie in particular give her that no one else does?

4. Why does Marie take pride in the achievement of reaching sixty (p. 41?2) but feel no urge to try to achieve anything new?

5. Marie is critical of the way many women her age appear asexual, yet she makes a big deal of swearing off men and sex for the rest of her life?leading an asexual lifestyle, as it were. Does she mean it? What?s behind her determination? Is giving up something she doesn?t have really a sacrifice or does it mean something else?

6. Marie?s and Penny?s hypochondria contrast poignantly with Hughie?s apparent denial. What do the way these characters face serious issues of health say about them?

7. We know what Marie thinks of other sixtysomethings? efforts to try new things and otherwise attempt to make themselves feel (and look) young and attractive?Penny, for example. But what might Penny think of Marie?s attitude?

8. "How many other characters can I expect to be before I die?? wonders Marie (p. 81). Earlier she has mentioned seeing her older self and her younger self as distinct from each other. Later, she and Hughie agree that people are made up of many ?real selves? that are often in conflict with one another. How does this come through in the character of Marie? Does she surprise us (and herself)? Does she see other people as having multiple selves?

9. Hughie seems to face his end in a matter-of-fact way, including explaining to Marie how good it feels to be free of all the choices and pressures of really old age (pp. 165?166). How does this compare with Marie?s attitude about aging? Is she in denial herself?

10. How does the time in which Marie and her contemporaries were young adults (the reckless, tumultuous 1960s) affect the way they face getting older? Why is someone like Philippa?s sister, who speaks to Marie of ?our age,? different?

11. In theory, Marie confides all to her diary, writing her most private thoughts with candor. But in practice, does she?

12. If Marie could be persuaded to join a book club, what kind of member would she be? How would she contribute? How would she get along with other members?

Author Bio

Virginia Ironside is a journalist, agony aunt, and author, divorced living in West London. She has one son and one grandson.

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