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The Dirty Book Club

by Lisi Harrison



About the Book

From the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Clique* series comes a novel about the importance of friendship and, of course, the pleasure of a dirty book.

M.J. Stark?s life is picture-perfect --- she has her dream job as a magazine editor, a sexy doctor boyfriend and a glamorous life in New York City. But behind her success, there is a debilitating sense of loneliness. So when her boss betrays her and her boyfriend offers her a completely new life in California, she trades her cashmere for caftans and gives it a try. Once there, M.J. is left to fend for herself in a small beach town, with only the company of her elderly neighbor, Gloria, and an ocean that won?t shut up.

One afternoon, M.J. discovers that Gloria has suddenly moved to Paris with her friends to honor a 50-year-old pact. And in lieu of a goodbye, she?s left a mysterious invitation to a secret club --- one that only reads erotic books. Curious, M.J. accepts and meets the three other hand-selected club members. As they bond over naughty bestsellers and the shocking letters they inherited from the original club members, the four strangers start to divulge the intimate details of their own lives?and as they open up, they learn that friendship might just be the key to rewriting their own stories: all they needed was to find each other first.

Discussion Guide

1. As THE DIRTY BOOK CLUB begins, the narrator tells the reader that for Gloria Golden, ?Potluck Fridays weren?t really about making the most of her newly renovated kitchen? (page 3). Why are Potluck Fridays so important to Gloria? Why is she wary to admit the true reason that she looks forward to them? Do you think, as Gloria does, that she ?had no business being sour?? Why or why not?

2. In a letter to the next generation of the Dirty Book Club, the founding members write, ?A dirty martini will make you

admit things to other people, but a dirty book? That will make you admit things to yourself? (page 104). Discuss this statement. What, if anything, do the DBC members discover about themselves as a result of their reading selections? Did you find any of their discoveries particularly shocking? If so, why?

3. Describe the women whom Gloria and her friends choose to carry on the tradition of the Dirty Book Club. Given how different each of the women are from one another, did you think that the DBC would last? Why or why not? Why do you think these particular women were selected by Gloria and her friends?

4. Gloria tells M.J., ?[E]very day we?re alive is a special occasion? (page 54). Do you agree with her? What do you think M.J.?s life philosophy is when she first meets Gloria? Compare it with Gloria?s. In what ways are the two women alike? Were you surprised by Gloria?s actions toward M.J.? Which ones and why?

5. Addie defines love as ?accepting someone for who they are, not for who they?ll be once you change them? (page 180). How do each of the other women in the Dirty Book Club define love? How would you describe it? Discuss the relationships in THE DIRTY BOOK CLUB. Which ones, if any, exemplify your definition of love?

6. M.J. looks on as Gloria giggles with Liddy and Dotty during Leo?s shiva, ?amazed by Gloria?s lightness during such a dark time,? and wonders ?[w]ere her friendships that strong, or had her relationship with Leo been that weak?? (page 77). What do you think? Describe Gloria?s friendships with her friends. How have they helped one another get through difficult times? Do you have any friends like Liddy and Dotty? Tell your book club about them.

7. Liddy?s actions lead to the disbanding of the Dirty Book Club in 1987. What does Liddy do that causes the other members to lose the ability to trust her? Were you surprised by their reaction to her disclosure? Do you agree that she betrayed the other members of the book club? Explain your answer.

8. Describe M.J.?s relationship with Dan. Do you think that they were well suited for each other? During an argument, M.J. tells Dan that he ?sold me on a life that doesn?t exist? (page 197). Is M.J. right? What kind of life was she expecting in California? What were her reasons for moving there?

9. How do the book selections of the Dirty Book Club aid in your understanding of the club?s participants? Have you read any of the DBC?s selections? If so, what did you think of them?

10. What was your first impression of Addie Oliver? Did you like her? Why or why not? Did your feelings about her change during the course of the novel? If they did, talk with your book club about what made you change your mind.

11. When Marjorie is critical of Gloria for that ??I can?t confab about Leo? thing,? Gloria responds that she?s married. Do you agree with Gloria that ?being husband and wife...is different than going steady in high school? (page 8)? Are Gloria?s friends wrong to expect the same level of intimacy with Gloria now that she?s married? If so, why?

12. At Addie?s party, M.J. reminds herself that Dr. Cohn, her psychologist, has said ?recovery was about progress, not perfection? (page 153). Do you agree with Dr. Cohn? Do you think that M.J. is on her way to a full recovery? How has M.J.?s past influenced her current behavior? Did you notice any signs that she was on her way to healing? If so, talk with your book club about them.

13. When M.J. tells Gloria that Dan is her best friend, Gloria?s response is, ?Now *that?s* a problem? (page 65). Discuss Gloria?s statement. Do you agree with her that it?s problematic for Dan to be filling the role of best friend for M.J.? Do you think that a romantic partner can fulfill the same needs as a best friend? Why does Gloria think that the two roles should be separate?

14. Although M.J. ?didn?t have to do it all,? she did. ?Work was her escape? (page 29). What is M.J. using work to escape from? Do you think her coping mechanism is a healthy one?

15. M.J. views Gayle?s decision about changes in *City*?s management as a betrayal. Why does she have this perspective? Do you agree with M.J., or do you think that Gayle is genuinely trying to do ?what?s best for the magazine? (page 39)? Explain your answer.

Enhance Your Book Club

1. If you haven?t read the Dirty Book Club?s selections, pick one as a group and discuss it at your next book club meeting. Do you have the same reaction to the book as the characters in THE DIRTY BOOK CLUB do? Does reading about their discussions change the experience for you? If so, how?

2. Often an individual?s name has an interesting history. For example, M.J.?s full name is May-June. Like the rest of her family, she was named after her birth month --- or birth months. As M.J. tells Dan, ?I was born at 11:59 p.m. on May 31, so they gave me June [as a name], too? (page 43). Discuss the importance of names with your book club. Why did your parents choose to name you as they did? If you have children, do your children?s names have any special significance?

3. Leo bemoans the current state of films, telling M.J., ?I was a producer at Paramount for forty-eight years. Back when people who loved films made films? (page 60). Watch some films from Hollywood?s Golden Age with your book club and discuss them. Which films are your favorites? How do these films compare to Hollywood?s current offerings? Do you agree with Leo that movies today simply are not as good as they were during the Golden Age of Hollywood? Why or why not?

Author Bio

Lisi Harrison worked at MTV Networks in New York City for 12 years. She left her position as senior director of development in 2003 to write *The Clique* series. That series has sold more than eight million copies and has been on the *New York Times* bestseller list for more than 200 weeks, with 10 titles hitting #1 and foreign rights sold in 33 countries. THE ALPHAS was a #1 *New York Times* bestseller, and MONSTER HIGH was an instant bestseller. Her latest YA series is *Pretenders*. Lisi lives in Laguna Beach, California, and has been a proud member of her own dirty book club since 2007.

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