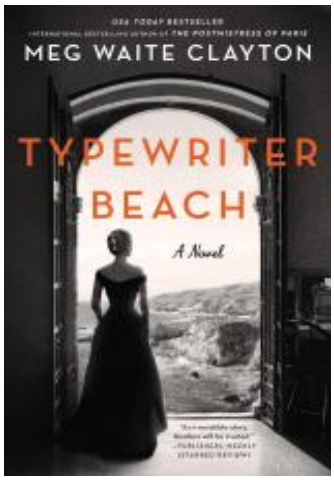
ReadingGroupGuides
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Typewriter Beach

by Meg Waite Clayton



About the Book

Set in Carmel-by-the-Sea and Hollywood, TYPEWRITER BEACH is an unforgettable story of the unlikely friendship between an Oscar-nominated screenwriter and a young actress hoping to be Alfred Hitchcock's new star.

1957. Isabella Giori is 10 months into a standard seven-year studio contract when she auditions with Alfred Hitchcock. Just weeks later, she is sequestered by the studio?s ?fixer? in a tiny Carmel cottage, waiting and dreading.

Meanwhile, next door, Léon Chazan is annoyed when Iz interrupts his work on yet another screenplay he won?t be able to sell, because he?s been blacklisted. Soon, they?re together in his roadster, speeding down the fog-shrouded Big Sur coast.

2018. Twenty-six-year-old screenwriter Gemma Chazan, in Carmel to sell her grandfather?s cottage, finds a hidden safe full of secrets --- raising questions about who the screenwriter known simply as Chazan really was, and if she can live up to his name.

In graceful prose and with an intimate understanding of human nature, Meg Waite Clayton captures the joys and frustrations of being a writer, being a woman, being a star and being in love. TYPEWRITER BEACH is the story of two women separated by generations --- a tale of ideas and ideals, passion and persistence, creativity, politics and family.

Discussion Guide

1. How does the friendship between Isabella and Leo evolve throughout the story? What external pressures challenge their bond, and how do they respond to these challenges?

2. The novel depicts several friendships formed in unusual circumstances. What does this say about the role of shared experiences in building connections, particularly in the backdrop of Hollywood and McCarthyism?

3. Do you think the friendships in the story are more supportive or more challenging? Can you identify moments when the characters helped each other grow or, alternatively, held each other back?

4. Hollywood in the 1950s placed stringent expectations on women regarding their appearance and behavior. How do Isabella?s experiences reflect these pressures, and what parallels can you draw to societal expectations of women today?

5. Isabella faces a lack of agency in her career due to studio control over her image and roles. How do the other female characters in the story grapple with their own struggles for autonomy, both personally and professionally?

6. The novel explores moral double standards for men and women in Hollywood. For instance, Ingrid Bergman faced backlash for having a child out of wedlock, while male stars were not subjected to similar scrutiny. How does this double standard affect the careers and lives of the female characters in the story?

7. How does the fear and paranoia of McCarthyism impact the characters? lives and relationships, particularly for those in the Hollywood film industry?

8. Leo is blacklisted for refusing to name names, leading to professional and personal repercussions. What does this reveal about courage and compromise in times of moral and political crisis?

9. Discuss how the inclusion of McCarthyism enriches the novel?s themes. Do you think it serves as a parallel to any contemporary issues?

10. Hollywood during the 1950s is portrayed as glamorous on the surface but rife with power struggles, betrayal and manipulation. How does this duality affect the characters? ambitions and values?

11. How do the challenges Isabella faces in the film industry shape her character and decisions? Do you think she emerges stronger as a result of these experiences?

12. The novel contrasts the industry?s cutthroat nature with moments of kindness and solidarity among characters. Do these moments of support feel authentic, or are they outweighed by the industry?s darker elements?

13. How does the depiction of Hitchcock?s behavior toward Isabella highlight systemic sexism in the film industry? Are there any characters or events that challenge these norms?

14. The idea of controlling women?s images and roles is a recurring theme in the book. How does this impact Isabella?s career, and how does she push back against these constraints, if at all?

15. Reflecting on both historical and contemporary Hollywood, do you think the portrayal of sexism in TYPEWRITER BEACH resonates with ongoing issues in the film industry and in society more broadly today?

16. The novel blends personal struggles with historical drama. How effectively does the author balance these elements? Did one aspect resonate with you more than the other?

17. Why do you think the author chose to juxtapose Isabella?s career struggles in Hollywood with the broader societal struggles of McCarthyism and sexism? How do these elements interact thematically?

18. If you could ask the author one question about the novel?s historical context or character development, what would it be?

19. Did any specific characters or moments in the book leave a lasting impression on you? Why?

20. What lessons or insights did you take away from the book regarding friendship, perseverance or standing up for one?s beliefs?

21. How did the historical elements of the story enhance (or detract from) your connection to the characters and their struggles?

Author Bio

New York Times bestselling author and book club favorite Meg Waite Clayton is the author of nine novels, most recently the instant *USA Today* bestseller TYPEWRITER BEACH and the international bestsellers THE POSTMISTRESS OF PARIS and THE LAST TRAIN TO LONDON. Her books have been published in 24 languages, and have been finalists for the Bellwether Prize (now the PEN Bellwether), the National Jewish Book Award, and the Langum Prize. She also writes for major newspapers and magazines, mentors in the OpEd Project, and is a member of the National Book Critics Circle and the California bar. She lives in California and Connecticut.

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