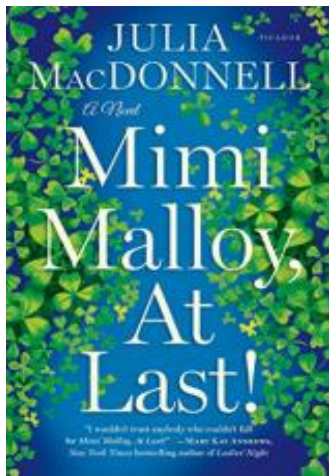


# Mimi Malloy, At Last!

by Julia MacDonnell

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## About the Book

Mimi Malloy was born into an Irish-Catholic brood of seven, and she has done her best to raise six daughters of her own. Now they're grown, and Mimi cherishes the comforts of her new life: Frank Sinatra on her stereo, walks with her super, Duffy, and spare time that is finally hers to spend. Sure, her eldest worries about her memory lapses, and Mimi's surviving sisters, who love to gossip, question her indifference to the past. As far as Mimi is concerned, she's entitled to enjoy the present --- and that includes the occasional Manhattan.

But when she stumbles upon a long-lost pendant of her mother's, recollections of a shocking and painful childhood begin to surface. With the help of her siblings and her daughters, Mimi must find the courage to confront her troubled history --- and discover that the stories that refuse to be forgotten are the ones she ought to treasure most. A "moving, funny masterpiece about love, memory, and the family ties we sometimes need to untangle" (Caroline Leavitt), *MIMI MALLOY, AT LAST!* is an unforgettable novel, alive with hope, unexpected romance and the magic of hard-earned insight.

## Discussion Guide

1. Mimi inhabits many female roles: homemaker, mother, daughter, sister, grandmother, wife and girlfriend. Which of these roles are most important to her? Which are positive, negative, or both?
2. As narrator, Mimi speaks to the reader in a vernacular, funny, sometimes salty tone about her past, her family, her life. Why do you think this narrative voice is effective?
3. Mimi has been told that she "let herself go." She says "instead, I was erased." What in her life (besides her once "great gams") has she let go or been erased from? How does this affect her point of view?

4. Many different familial relationships are on display in this novel. One very complex one is that between fathers and daughters. What is your take on Mimi's father? How do her relationships with her ex, Jack, and with Duffy reflect her relationship to her beloved Da?
5. When her daughters wouldn't call her Mammy or Mommy, Mimi concluded that, "One vowel isn't worth a fight." How has Mimi allowed her family (family of origin and or her ex-husband and daughters) to shape her identity and opinions? What habits or elements of her personality does she fight for with her family?
6. The sisterhood of the Sheehan girls is based on their shared difficult childhoods. Mimi describes them as "one body," --- "Lots of arms and legs, but a single heart and soul. Every now and again, this heart would break?" How did this intimacy play out through their lives?
7. The novel offers a view of the interior lives of children. What's going on in the lives of the "glorious Sheehan girls" that they see differently from the way the adults perceive the same events? At what point do perceptions change? How?
8. Why do you think Mimi has not told her daughters about Da's musical accomplishments?
9. In a passage on page 287, Mimi recalls many types of "falling" that have occurred in her family. Why is she so concerned about these various types of falling? How does she relate them so what she sees as her own fall?
10. Discuss the notion of Irish identity compared to the Irish-American idea of Irish identity. Which does Mimi find more true for herself?
11. For both Mimi and for Duffy, true and false memories have been important. Which is more difficult to overcome? Would you agree with Duffy when he says that, "Forgetting's not always such a bad thing"?
12. Mimi's blue pendant plays an important role in the story. What do you think it represents? Are there any objects that play a similar role in your life?
13. "Faeries" can be both magical and dark. How have they impacted the overarching story of Mimi's life? How important are they?
14. How is MIMI MALLOY, AT LAST! a "Cinderella story"? How does Mimi's story turn the Cinderella story on its head?

## Author Bio

Julia MacDonnell's fiction has appeared in many literary magazines, including the *American Literary Review*, *Briar Cliff Review* and *Many Mountains Moving*, and her journalism has been featured in *The Boston Globe*, *The New York Daily News* and the *Columbia Journalism Review*, among other publications. A tenured professor at Rowan University, she is the nonfiction editor of *Philadelphia Stories*. MIMI MALLOY, AT LAST! is her first novel in 20 years.

## Critical Praise

?Cathartic, suspenseful and droll, MIMI offers a hopeful take on both old age and bad blood.?

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### **Mimi Malloy, At Last!**

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**Publication Date:** March 31, 2015

**Genres:** Fiction

**Paperback:** 288 pages

**Publisher:** Picador

**ISBN-10:** 1250063779

**ISBN-13:** 9781250063779