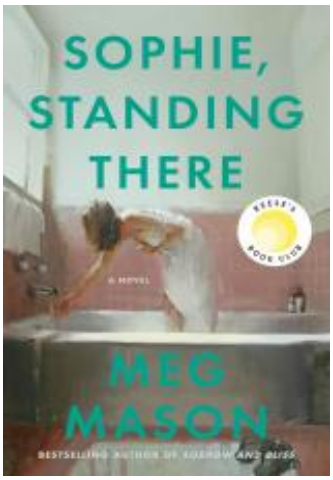
ReadingGroupGuides
The online community for reading groups

Sophie, Standing There

by Meg Mason



About the Book

The ?brilliant? (Ann Patchett) and much-beloved author of the critically acclaimed SORROW AND BLISS returns with a tender and hilarious novel about heartbreak and the journey from isolation and loneliness towards love.

Sophie Pattison loves books. Along with a dream job at a local book festival, she has a husband she adores; a lifelong best friend, Emma; and a brother she?s always been close to. Which makes you wonder why since Christmas, Sophie has been living alone, estranged from Emma, avoiding her brother, and about to be fired.

Now it feels like the only thing she has left is reading. When Sophie rediscovers an author she first read in her 20s, the words on the page reach her in a new way --- becoming both solace and company. Sophie devours every one of the author's novels and begins to dream of meeting her, but knows they never will. But what if she did? What if, by then, the author feels like a friend? What if, for Sophie, it feels almost like love?

In this much anticipated novel, Meg Mason captures the heartache and dark humor of our relationships in all their complexity, with a story about the power of connection and an ode to the inexplicable nature of the human heart.

Discussion Guide

1. Why do you think Meg Mason chose to include 10 real authors, such as George Saunders, Ann Patchett and Bonnie Garmus, in SOPHIE, STANDING THERE? How would the novel have been different without them?

2. Sophie is naturally cheerful, optimistic and kind. Do you think the author was reacting against the sad girl trend in fiction, which Sophie herself addresses in the novel?

3. A parasocial relationship is ?a connection that someone feels between themselves and a famous person they do not know.? Although the term ?parasocial? carries a certain edge, is there an extent to which an imagined connection between readers and authors is normal and could be, at times, beneficial?

4. Sophie?s brother, Laurie, and best friend, Emma, have a constant presence through the novel, but we never actually meet them in the flesh until the very end. Why do you think the author made that decision? What effect does it have?

5. Although the novel reads in the third-person point of view, the action is filtered through Sophie?s consciousness, using a narrative style called skaz, which aims to mimic everyday speech, the rhythms, idioms and unpolished phrasing of, traditionally, a character of lesser education. How does this show itself in the text? Does it give us a clearer sense of Sophie?s character?

6. How would the novel have differed with an omniscient narrator, giving insight into Lilac?s interior thinking as well as Sophie?s?

7. The specific nature of Sophie?s childhood is revealed late in the novel, although there are hints throughout. How do you see her sect background influencing her behavior and decisions as an adult?

8. Sophie and the booksellers, Rob and Cass, adore Lilac Dunne?s work, but other characters such as Emma and Jo aren?t convinced, and as readers, we?re given only a few sample lines of a Lilac Dunne novel. Is it possible that Lilac Dunne?s novels aren?t as good as Sophie believes them to be?

9. In your opinion, what are Lilac?s motivations for spending so much time with Sophie?

10. Do you think it?s possible as a reader to still enjoy the novels of an author with a famously complex private life or a negative public image?

11. Sophie makes three visits to Rob and Cass in the novel. What is the importance of the bookshop to her?

12. The final chapter of the novel breaks the fourth wall. Why did the author decide to end the novel by talking directly to the reader and, finally, ?you??

Author Bio

Meg Mason is the author of SOPHIE, STANDING THERE; YOU BE MOTHER; and SORROW AND BLISS, which became an international bestseller after it was published in 2021. Winner of the 2022 Fiction Book of the Year at the British Book Awards, and shortlisted for the 2022 Women's Prize for Fiction, it has since been translated into 30 languages. Meg's first career was in journalism, beginning at *The Times of London* and later writing for *Vogue*, *Elle*, *GQ*, *Sunday Style* and the *New Yorker*'s "Daily Shouts and Murmurs" column. Born in New Zealand, she lives in Sydney with her husband and two daughters.

Sophie, Standing There

by Meg Mason

Publication Date: September 29, 2026
Genres: Fiction, Women's Fiction
Hardcover: 352 pages
Publisher: Harper
ISBN-10: 0063493136
ISBN-13: 9780063493131