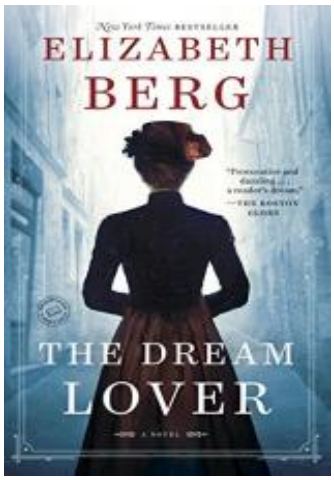
The Dream Lover

by Elizabeth Berg



About the Book

At the beginning of this powerful novel, we meet Aurore Dupin as she is leaving her estranged husband, a loveless marriage and her family?s estate in the French countryside to start a new life in Paris. There, she gives herself a new name --- George Sand --- and pursues her dream of becoming a writer, embracing an unconventional and even scandalous lifestyle.

Paris in the 19th century comes vividly alive, illuminated by the story of the loves, passions and fierce struggles of a woman who defied the confines of society. Sand?s many lovers and friends include Frédéric Chopin, Gustave Flaubert, Franz Liszt, Eugène Delacroix, Victor Hugo, Marie Dorval and Alfred de Musset. As Sand welcomes fame and friendship, she fights to overcome heartbreak and prejudice, failure and loss. Though considered the most gifted genius of her time, she works to reconcile the pain of her childhood, of disturbing relationships with her mother and daughter, and of her intimacies with women and men. Will the life she longs for always be just out of reach --- a dream?

Brilliantly written in luminous prose, and with remarkable insights into the heart and mind of a literary force, THE DREAM LOVER tells the unforgettable story of a courageous, irresistible woman.

Discussion Guide

1.Sand felt abandoned by her mother. Did the circumstance of having been left with her grandmother at an early age make her stronger or weaker? How do you think life would have been different for George if her father had lived?

2. George Sand behaved boldly, but was at heart very shy. What other paradoxes did you notice in her character and in her life?

3. Two very different environments were important to George Sand?s life and work: the city of Paris and her country

home at Nohant. Which do you think was more important to her? What did each offer her?

4. How do you think Sand?s marriage affected her art? What do you think contributes more strongly into the making of an artist: genetics or life circumstances?

5. George Sand demonstrated a fluidity in assuming the roles of both man and woman. She often referred to herself as a man, yet Alfred de Musset referred to her as the most feminine woman he had ever known. What was your perception of George?

6. The mother-daughter relationships in THE DREAM LOVER are particularly complex. Did you think Sophie was a ?bad? mother? What about George herself?

7. What do you think George Sand needed most from a relationship? How is that different from what she believed she needed?

8. George Sand described herself this way: ??very impressionable, carried away by my love of beauty, hungry for truth, faulty in judgement, often absurd, and always sincere.? Do you agree?

9. In her quest to live truthfully, George Sand left her husband altogether and her children much of the time. How do you feel about that? Was it necessity or selfishness?

10. George Sand quickly became maternal with her male lovers. She said at one point that it was so they would become dependent on her and not leave her. What do you think of this statement?

11. One of the great sorrows in George Sand?s life was her contentious relationship with her daughter. What do you think might have improved her relationship with Solange?

12. THE DREAM LOVER suggests that Marie Dorval was the great love of George Sand?s life. How did you feel about Marie?s assertion that one seeks not the object of one?s desire, but desire itself? Could George Sand ever have accepted anything but continuous passion in a relationship?

13. Nature and spirituality were important constants in Sand?s life. What were the sources for these affinities? How did they play out in her work and in her life? How did they affect her world view? If she had been allowed to become a nun, do you think she would have stayed one?

14. Some people say that the idea of what could have been is the hardest sorrow to bear. Do you agree?

15. Did you learn any surprising things about George Sand?s famous friends (Chopin, Flaubert, Balzac, Liszt)?

16. At the end of the novel, there is a quote from Sand from a letter she wrote to Delacroix, saying that nothing dies, nothing is lost and nothing ends. What sentiments or experiences do you think fueled such a remark? How do you interpret it?

17. Do you think that after having lived over 150 years ago, George Sand and the things she wrote about are still relevant?

18. THE DREAM LOVER invites us into the life of salons. Do you think that book clubs help to bring back some semblance of that kind of regular, enriching and stimulating encounter? Why do we need book clubs? What do they offer our spirits and psyches that reading alone does not? How can they be expanded to provide an even deeper experience?

Author Bio

Elizabeth Berg is the *New York Times* bestselling author of many novels, including THE STORY OF ARTHUR TRULUV, OPEN HOUSE (an Oprah?s Book Club selection), TALK BEFORE SLEEP and THE YEAR OF PLEASURES, as well as the short story collection THE DAY I ATE WHATEVER I WANTED. DURABLE GOODS and JOY SCHOOL were selected as ALA Best Books of the Year. She adapted THE PULL OF THE MOON into a play that enjoyed sold-out performances in Chicago and Indianapolis.

Berg?s work has been published in 31 countries, and three of her novels have been turned into television movies. She is the founder of Writing Matters, a quality reading series dedicated to serving author, audience and community. She teaches one-day writing workshops and is a popular speaker at venues around the country. Some of her most popular Facebook postings have been collected in MAKE SOMEONE HAPPY, STILL HAPPY and HAPPY TO BE HERE. She lives outside Chicago.

Critical Praise

?In her masterly new novel, Elizabeth Berg inhabits the adventurous heart of George Sand, making sense of a puzzling legend who dared to live and write against the grain.?

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