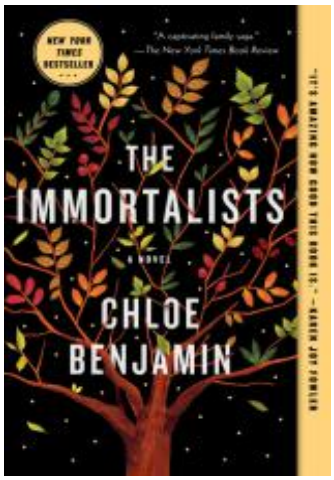
The Immortalists

by Chloe Benjamin



About the Book

A dazzling family love story reminiscent of EVERYTHING I NEVER TOLD YOU from a novelist heralded by Lorrie Moore as a "great new talent."

If you knew the date of your death, how would you live your life?

It's 1969 in New York City's Lower East Side, and word has spread of the arrival of a mystical woman, a traveling psychic who claims to be able to tell anyone the day they will die. The Gold children --- four adolescents on the cusp of self-awareness --- sneak out to hear their fortunes.

Their prophecies inform their next five decades. Golden-boy Simon escapes to the West Coast, searching for love in '80s San Francisco; dreamy Klara becomes a Las Vegas magician, obsessed with blurring reality and fantasy; eldest son Daniel seeks security as an army doctor post-9/11, hoping to control fate; and bookish Varya throws herself into longevity research, where she tests the boundary between science and immortality.

A sweeping novel of remarkable ambition and depth, THE IMMORTALISTS probes the line between destiny and choice, reality and illusion, this world and the next. It is a deeply moving testament to the power of story, the nature of belief, and the unrelenting pull of familial bonds.

Discussion Guide

1. THE IMMORTALISTS explores the degree to which we shape our own destinies. Do you believe that the siblings? fate was preordained? Why or why not?

2. The novel takes place in very different settings --- 1960s New York City, the San Francisco dance scene, glitzy Las

Vegas hotels. In what ways do these locations affect the characters? Why do you think all four of the siblings moved away from New York City?

3. THE IMMORTALISTS is narrated by the four siblings in separate sections. What was your reading experience when you switched sections? Did you identify more closely with certain siblings?

4. The power of belief --- whether it be magic, religious faith or storytelling --- is an important theme in the novel. How does belief affect each of the siblings? What is different or similar about the stories they tell themselves?

5. At its heart, THE IMMORTALISTS is a family love story, exploring both past and future generations of the Gold family. In what ways does family history shape us? What kind of legacies do the four siblings leave behind?

6. How do magic and reality blur in the novel? Were there any particular moments that seemed to defy logic? Why are certain characters drawn to magic and the unknowable more than others?

7. Discuss the siblings? significant others: Raj, Mira and Robert. How are their lives affected by the prophecy? How do romantic and familial relationships interact and contrast in THE IMMORTALISTS?

8. At the end of the novel, Gertie tells Varya about the beauty and freedom in uncertainty, questioning why her children believed the fortune teller. Did you believe the fortune teller? What gives the fortune teller her power? What freedoms does uncertainty bring?

9. What do you imagine happens to Varya after the book ?s ending? How have her views on longevity and death changed?

10. Would you want to find out the date of your death? How would you live your life differently if you had this information?

Author Bio

Chloe Benjamin is the bestselling author of THE ANATOMY OF DREAMS, THE IMMORTALISTS and UNDER STORY.

A Barnes & Noble Discover Great New Writers selection, LibraryReads favorite and #1 Indie Next pick, THE IMMORTALISTS was named a best book of 2018 by NPR, *The Washington Post*, *Entertainment Weekly* and others. THE ANATOMY OF DREAMS received the Edna Ferber Fiction Book Award and was longlisted for the 2014 Center for Fiction First Novel Prize.

Originally from San Francisco, CA, Chloe is a graduate of Vassar College and the M.F.A. in fiction at the University of Wisconsin. Her work has been translated into over 30 languages. She lives with her husband in the San Francisco Bay Area.

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