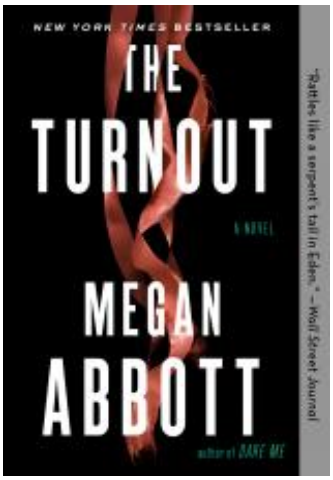
ReadingGroupGuides
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The Turnout

by Megan Abbott



About the Book

Bestselling and award-winning author Megan Abbott's revelatory and mesmerizing new novel is set against the hothouse of a family-run ballet studio.

With their long necks and matching buns and pink tights, Dara and Marie Durant have been dancers since they can remember. Growing up, they were homeschooled and trained by their glamorous mother, founder of the Durant School of Dance. After their parents' death in a tragic accident nearly a dozen years ago, the sisters began running the school together, along with Charlie, Dara's husband and once their mother's prized student.

Marie, warm and soft, teaches the younger students; Dara, with her precision, trains the older ones; and Charlie, sidelined from dancing after years of injuries, rules over the back office. Circling around one another, the three have perfected a dance, six days a week, that keeps the studio thriving. But when a suspicious accident occurs, just at the onset of the school's annual performance of "The Nutcracker" --- a season of competition, anxiety and exhilaration --- an interloper arrives and threatens the sisters' delicate balance.

Taut and unnerving, THE TURNOUT is Megan Abbott at the height of her game. With uncanny insight and hypnotic writing, it is a sharp and strange dissection of family ties and sexuality, femininity and power, and a tale that is both alarming and irresistible.

Discussion Guide

1. In THE TURNOUT, sisters Dara and Marie were homeschooled and raised in the ballet studio run by their mother. In what ways did the sisters have an atypical upbringing? How did their mother, and the rigorous structure of ballet training, influence them? How did Dara and Marie individually internalize this influence, and how do their differences manifest in adulthood? Are they so different after all?

2. Dara, Marie and Charlie, Dara?s husband, are a tightly enmeshed trio. Discuss both the personal and professional dynamics among them. What accounts for their closeness? In what way do their bonds transcend traditional sibling and sibling-in-law relationships?

3. Resistance to change is a big theme in this novel. Why do you think Dara, Marie and Charlie are so insistent on maintaining the status quo? What are some things that come into their lives that disrupt that? Would these changes have happened without the introduction of Derek?

4. Ballet is often considered incredibly glamorous, but the behind-the-scenes look at the Durant School of Dance shows a very different side to the art form. Were you surprised, or not surprised, by anything in the studio or with the students and the practice of ballet? Do you think these rigors are specific to ballet?

5. Talk about the Durant house. What are some of its characteristics? In what ways did you see it come to embody elements of the story?

6. Marie becomes infatuated with Derek, the contractor. Why do you think she is so drawn to him, and why does he hold such power over her? Were you surprised by their relationship? Discuss how his invasion of the studio space impacts all three members of the trio.

7. Neither Dara nor Marie has any children of her own, but both play a big role in the lives of their young students. How does each of the sisters navigate this type of relationship differently, and how much do their childhood experiences inform how they act as adult mentors?

8. A shocking act of violence occurs toward the end of THE TURNOUT. Were you surprised by what happened? Did you see any signs leading up to the event?

9. "The Nutcracker" is one of the most famous ballets of all time, in spite of its relatively dark subject matter. What do you think of when you think of "The Nutcracker"? How do themes from the ballet show themselves in THE TURNOUT?

10. What do you think is next for Dara, Marie and Charlie?

Author Bio

Megan Abbott is the Edgar Award-winning author of 12 crime novels, including YOU WILL KNOW ME, GIVE ME YOUR HAND and the *New York Times* bestseller THE TURNOUT, the winner of the *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize. She received her Ph.D. in English and American literature from New York University, and her writing has appeared in the *New York Times*, the *Guardian*, the *Paris Review* and the *Wall Street Journal*

. "Dare Me," the series she adapted from her own novel, now streaming on Netflix.

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