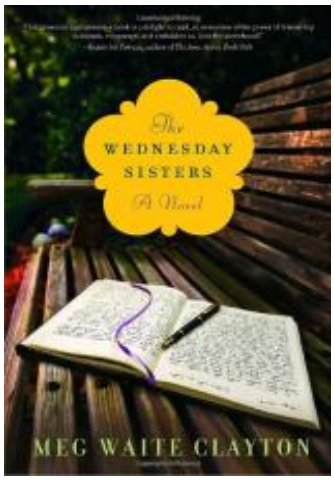
The Wednesday Sisters

by Meg Waite Clayton



About the Book

Friendship, loyalty, and love lie at the heart of Meg Waite Clayton?s beautifully written, poignant, and sweeping novel of five women who, over the course of four decades, come to redefine what it means to be family.

For thirty-five years, Frankie, Linda, Kath, Brett, and Ally have met every Wednesday at the park near their homes in Palo Alto, California. Defined when they first meet by what their husbands do, the young homemakers and mothers are far removed from the Summer of Love that has enveloped most of the Bay Area in 1967. These ?Wednesday Sisters? seem to have little in common: Frankie is a timid transplant from Chicago, brutally blunt Linda is a remarkable athlete, Kath is a Kentucky debutante, quiet Ally has a secret, and quirky, ultra-intelligent Brett wears little white gloves with her miniskirts. But they are bonded by a shared love of both literature --- Fitzgerald, Eliot, Austen, du Maurier, Plath, and Dickens --- and the Miss America Pageant, which they watch together every year.

As the years roll on and their children grow, the quintet forms a writers circle to express their hopes and dreams through poems, stories, and, eventually, books. Along the way, they experience history in the making: Vietnam, the race for the moon, and a women?s movement that challenges everything they have ever thought about themselves, while at the same time supporting one another through changes in their personal lives brought on by infidelity, longing, illness, failure, and success.

Humorous and moving, **The Wednesday Sisters** is a literary feast for book lovers that earns a place among those popular works that honor the joyful, mysterious, unbreakable bonds between friends.

Discussion Guide

1. The Wednesday Sisters? friendships are complex, constantly evolving, and occasionally downright messy. Yet even as their bonds are tested, the group endures and grows stronger. Does this circle of friends ring true to you? Are Frankie,

Linda, Kath, Brett, and Ally?s relationships with one another similar to your own friendships?

2. Why do you think Frankie finds it so difficult to tell Danny that she?s writing a book when she has no trouble at all confiding this fact to her husband?s boss? What other secrets in the novel are kept and revealed in surprising ways?

3. Why does Kath go so far in trying to win Lee back? Did this surprise you? Would you, like Kath?s friends, be reluctant to counsel her to leave her husband?

4. What did you first make of Brett?s white gloves? What do you think they symbolize, if anything?

5. Linda?s breast cancer and Ally?s fertility issues cause them each to doubt their femininity, and leave their friends at a loss as to how to help them. Have you or a friend ever been through a similar crisis? What has helped you hold onto your sense of self through tough times? How have your friendships affected this experience?

6. The old abandoned mansion --- ?a Miss Havisham house,? as Frankie?s husband, Danny, calls it, after the moldering mansion in Dickens? **Great Expectations** --- is a haunting presence throughout most of the novel. What does this house seem to symbolize? Does it mean something different to each of the Sisters? What do you think is the significance of its destruction?

7. Published books are mentioned throughout the novel --- from **The Great Gatsby** to **The Bell Jar** to **To Kill a Mockingbird**. What role do these titles play in **The Wednesday Sisters**? Why do you think each of the Sisters chose the ?model book? she did? What book might you choose yourself?

8. In **The Wednesday Sisters**, a writing group helps its members grow in self-awareness and self-confidence. Have you been a part of a group --- perhaps even a reading or writing group --- that has had a similar effect?

9. In one memorable scene, the Wednesday Sisters gather in a funeral parlor and imagine what they can accomplish in their lives that will not perish with their deaths. Did this make you think about writing in a new light? What about motherhood?

10. The women?s movement provides an evolving backdrop to lives of the women in **The Wednesday Sisters**. How did you relate the experiences of the Wednesday Sisters to events in your own life or in the lives of women you know who experienced it?

11. The Wednesday Sisters make a ritual of watching the Miss America pageant every year. How do their reactions to the pageant change over time, and why? How does the pageant itself change?

12. If the Miss America pageant is one recurring motif in the novel, the space program is another. What similarities and differences do you see in the way the author uses these two iconic slices of Americana?

13. Brett?s novel, **The Mrs. Americas**, posits a future in which a spaceship crewed by women and carrying a cargo of frozen sperm takes off on a mission to propagate the human race beyond the confines of our solar system. Why do you think Clayton chose to have Brett write this particular novel?

14. In addition to exploring the empowerment of women and the prevalence of sexism, **The Wednesday Sisters** addresses other social issues. In what ways race and class raised in the novel?

15. Why do you think Clayton chose to set the book in the era and the place that she does? How might the story be different if it were set in the present day? In a major city or a small town, rather than middleclass suburban Palo Alto?

16. Why do you think the author chose to set the climax of her novel on the set of "The Tonight Show with Johnny Carson"? How does this scene compare to the Miss America pageants described throughout the novel?

17. In the accompanying interview, author Meg Waite Clayton says, ?If an author makes me weep, I am theirs --- though why so many of us like books that make us cry puzzles me to no end.? Do you share this sentiment? Why do you think readers respond to novels that make us cry?

Author Bio

New York Times bestselling author and book club favorite Meg Waite Clayton is the author of nine novels, most recently the instant *USA Today* bestseller TYPEWRITER BEACH and the international bestsellers THE POSTMISTRESS OF PARIS and THE LAST TRAIN TO LONDON. Her books have been published in 24 languages, and have been finalists for the Bellwether Prize (now the PEN Bellwether), the National Jewish Book Award, and the Langum Prize. She also writes for major newspapers and magazines, mentors in the OpEd Project, and is a member of the National Book Critics Circle and the California bar. She lives in California and Connecticut.

Critical Praise

"Long before there were book clubs and play dates, there were **The Wednesday Sisters** --- a group of women whose shared love of literature transports them above the pains and pitfalls of ordinary life. While these women may seem like typical suburban housewives, each character has an intriguing secret and a rich interior life that drew me into the story and held me there. This remarkable group of women demonstrates that no matter what period of history in which we live, no matter what race, creed or class we are, no matter what pains we endure, our one unifying salvation can be books. And this book reminded me of why I love to read."

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