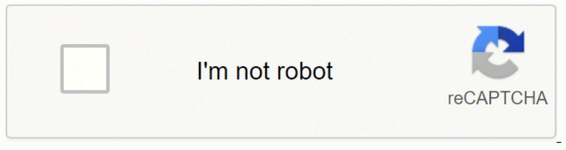

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Mrs dalloway book club questions

Small group of people having a book club meeting. Photo Courtesy: SolStock/iStock Whether you've been a member of a book club for a long time, just joined your local chapter of a Silent Book Club, became a new member of Book of the Month or — like me — simply decided reading consistently is one of your easily achievable new year's resolutions, finding the right title can be a bit of a challenge. I'm part of three different book clubs, each with different levels of commitment, and I only read whatever has been chosen about half of the time, and that's being generous. Sometimes I don't feel like spending time with a particular title — or author. The more participants a book club has, the more difficult it is to choose a novel that'll appeal to and satisfy everyone involved. "We think the best book club books are the ones you keep thinking about long after you've turned the last page — the ones that make you ask every friend and family member, 'Have you read…?' just so you can talk about it," say the folks at the online bookstore AbeBooks. Photo Courtesy: Maica/iStock I couldn't agree more with that. Even though there's no perfect answer to what makes for the great book club fit, here are a few additional tips that could help you choose that next memorable title: Length matters. Even though I devoured Donna Tartt's Pulitzer Prize-winning The Goldfinch, the members of one of my book clubs didn't appreciate that I suggested it as a read. I have the suspicion that the fact that Tartt's contemporary mystery is 771 pages long didn't help my case. We've since established a books-no-longer-than-300ish-pages rule. Genre matters. If your book club is themed or devoted to one genre or subject, stick to it. If you're a readers' collective who dig political memoirs, don't branch out into romantic literature and vice versa. If your book club doesn't have a theme though, find it. If you're open to anything — fiction, non-fiction, science books, essays, thrillers, best-sellers — you risk alienating part of the membership. One of my book clubs has that "anything goes" motto and more often than not I just don't even start whatever is supposed to be read that month. Even though the openness of the group allowed me to enjoy Simone de Beauvoir's feminist manifesto The Second Sex or Octavia E. Butler's dystopian novel The Parable of the Sower, I just knew Blockchain Chicken Farm was not for me. Recent releases make for fewer surprises and a better understanding of the current cultural sensibilities. In my search for great adventure reads, I gave both Jules Verne's Around the World in Eighty Days (1872) and Rafael Sabatini's Captain Blood (1922) a try. Both were problematic and I ended up abandoning the second one entirely. I'm not saying read only recently published stuff, but be aware that certain content with inapppropriate or outdated depictions of race, gender, class or sexual orientation can trigger readers. And remember that it's perfectly OK to not finish a book — you don't even have to start reading it in the first place. Choosing a title that will please you every single time is daunting. Doing it when there's a whole group of people involved is an impossible task. The power of a book club is to socialize and gather around a table — or Zoom meeting or a patch of grass in the park, in COVID times. You can even make things easier for your co-members and opt for the cheat method we employ at Ask's book club: we're selecting books that have also been adapted into movies. Don't judge us — sometimes we like chatting about a book even if we've only watched the movie. MORE FROM ASK.COM Page 1 of 4 Mrs. Dalloway Virginia Woolf, 1925Houghton Mifflin Harcourt216 ppISBN-13: 9780156628709Summary Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway is the inspiration for Michael Cunningham's The Hours, the award-winning novel and Oscar-nominated film. A 1925 landmark of modernist fiction that follows an the wife of an MP around London as she prepares for her party that afternoon.Direct and vivid in its telling of details, the novel shifts from the consciousness of Clarissa Dalloway to that of others, including a shell-shocked veteran of World War I whose destiny briefly intersects with hers. The feelings that loom behind such mundane events as buying flowers—the social alliances, the exchanges with shopkeepers, the fact of death—give Mrs. Dalloway its texture and richness. Heralded as Virginia Woolf's greatest novel, this is a vivid portrait of a single day in a woman's life. When we meet her, Mrs. Clarissa Dalloway is preoccupied with the last-minute details of party preparation while in her mind she is something much more than a perfect society hostess.As she readies her house, she is flooded with remembrances of faraway times. And, met with the realities of the present, Clarissa reexamines the choices that brought her there, hesitantly looking ahead to the unfamiliar work of growing old. (From Houghton Mifflin Harcourt edition, cover image, top right.) SPOILER ALERT: You may not want to read this post if you haven't already read this book and plan to do so! Virginia Woolf is like a diamond in the rough. And it was difficult for me to finally see that beautiful interior. Is it because I'm American? Is it because I'm from another era? Maybe both? I don't know. All I know is that I read Mrs. Dalloway and thought, "Um. I don't get it." I can see why in my college days, with so much literature and other educational things being thrown at me from all directions, I dismissed Woolf and let her get carried out of my brain with the maths and sciences on trash day. But this time around, I was determined to figure her out. Why is she a classic? What is going on that I'm missing? I know it's me… it has to be me… she's a classic. Authors don't become classics for no reason. So I recruited Cliff's Notes to help me, and I skimmed the book over again. Now I get it. I'm not just spouting what the Cliff's Notes said – I truly get it (I may not understand Clarissa Dalloway, but I get what Virginia Woolf is doing). And I'll do my best to explain the mystery to those of you who are like me and have a Virginia Woolf brain-block. On the surface level, the story of Mrs. Dalloway is, at best, decent. The writing is clear and coherent, but the story is bland and rather forgettable. However, right away, I loved how she weaved the lives of neighboring characters and was able to give you their histories but all within the time frame of a single day. It's unique even to this day and, as someone who dabbles in writing, I have to say that it's an amazing literary feat. And when you begin to dig deeper into the story, you realize it's beautiful and amazingly powerful. Let me begin the actual analysis by saying that Virginia Woolf was part of the modernism crowd. Here's my own definition of modernism as a literature era. Modernism was the beginning of the modern world as we see it. It took place from around 1890s-1940s (although some argue that it began later [1910s] and ended earlier [1930s]). Exact dates don't matter, per se. The point is that the people of this time were the movers and the shakers. They were the founders for equality whether it be women's rights or black-American rights. Modernism found its way into literature and it has a few certain characteristics that distinguish it. There's the loss of self or, in other words, the need for self-definition (I'm a woman, but does that define who I am?), there's usually a blending of roles (women are now doing things that only men would do in a previous era such as going to college), the stories oftentimes touch on madness, and there's psychological realism at play in most modern stories. They tended to experiment with the stream of consciousness and the unreliable narrator (although those literary devices were by no means invented by the modernists). I saw some of these characteristics right away in Mrs. Dalloway, such as the stream of consciousness and psychological realism, but, by the end of the book, I still didn't understand what Woolf was trying to do. That's when I consulted the Cliff's Notes. They helped me understand that the book is all about how different people view life, how people view people, and how people can be different around different people. I realized that the book is incredibly complex so I plan to just touch the surface and focus on Clarissa Dalloway, the main character. Because of its complexity, I would have to write multiple posts even just to compare Clarissa to Septimus, which is what Woolf is doing throughout the whole book. There is so much you could say that you could write more words in an analysis than Woolf did in the novel itself. Therefore, let me just write an introduction, if you will, to the character Clarissa, who is Mrs. Dalloway. Clarissa Dalloway is a woman living in what's known as the modern era. All around her are new inventions such as cars and airplanes. She's fascinated by these new inventions, the progress of technology, as we see in the first part of the book, but we learn later that she fears the progress of the woman. Just as she's fascinated by the new inventions, she's fascinated with the "new" woman as we see in her love for Sally, but she fears it at the same time. That's one of the struggles of Clarissa. Another struggle she has is in her fear of death. Not death itself, but the thought of not existing. It's these contrasting fears that shape who Clarissa is as a person. While on one hand, she's afraid to live life to her fullest, she also doesn't want to be non-existent. She's preoccupied by both of her fears, creating a constant inner struggle, but always letting the former dictate how she lives her life. As the characters' memories begin to take shape, we learn that Clarissa has flirted with being progressive but has never let herself take the ultimate plunge into becoming a "new" woman. We learn that she was at one time engaged to Peter Walsh who challenged her to step out of her comfort zone. He's the epitome of what Clarissa isn't – passionate and adventurous. He wanted her to share her thoughts and feelings with him, but Clarissa was afraid to do so because she was raised in the "traditional" woman ways. She was taught that being a lady meant being prim, precise, composed, proper. She was taught that men were superior and women were inferior. She was afraid of exposing herself to Peter. Clarissa eventually breaks up with Peter when she meets Richard Dalloway who is unadventurous and does not ask her to step out of her comfort zone, thereby creating a sanctuary for her in which she can hide her desire for passion. But then there's Sally Seton who's similar to Peter and very much opposite of Clarissa. Sally lives the life of a "modern" woman – however she desires. She breaks all the rules set for a "traditional" woman and lives from day to day, hour to hour with a passion for life. We see that the timid Clarissa greatly admires Sally. Clarissa's admiration is strong and passionate, but Sally, who reacts the same to everyone, doesn't fully understand the impact she's had on Clarissa. We know that the friendship fades, but Clarissa, even after so many years, still holds on tightly to the memories of her friend. These three people show us the contrasts in Clarissa. On one hand, she wants to be free and open like Sally. We see this when Sally kisses her, and Clarissa still thinks upon it so many years later. Peter had the door open for Clarissa to be that "new" woman with him, but she shrank back, being intimidated by the fact that Peter was a man, where she didn't shrink back with Sally. Clarissa instead shut the door and chose to live a quiet life where she would never need to show her passion with Richard Dalloway. Thus there's a part of her that's depressed and lonely because she's never allowed herself to live. What is Virginia Woolf trying to say? Is she showing us a side of her that is similar to Clarissa Dalloway? Did she harbor these same fears within herself? Some experts think this might be the case. Or is this a cautionary tale about holding back and not letting yourself be who you want to be?

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