

FICTION BOOK CLUB

July 2018 Selection

***The Little French Bistro* by Nina George**

Marianne is stuck in a loveless, unhappy marriage. After forty-one years, she has reached her limit, and one evening in Paris she decides to take action. Following a dramatic moment on the banks of the Seine, Marianne leaves her life behind and sets out for the coast of Brittany, also known as “the end of the world.”

Here she meets a cast of colorful and unforgettable locals who surprise her with their warm welcome, and the natural ease they all seem to have, taking pleasure in life’s small moments. And, as the parts of herself she had long forgotten return to her in this new world, Marianne learns it’s never too late to begin the search for what life should have been all along.

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Discussion Questions:

1. What elements of the story line affected you most personally? Was it Marianne’s loneliness? The way she boldly set out on a journey through a foreign country without knowing a word of the language?
2. Which character(s) did you identify with the most and why? Were there any characters that left you feeling perplexed or annoyed? Why?

3. The landscape is as much a protagonist in the book as the human characters (and to some extent, the animal ones). Is there a place, a region, a season in which you feel especially at home? Why? What appealed to you most about the Breton landscape is described—the light, the sea, the rocks, the stillness, the wildness?
4. Food, music and friendship: These are the essential ingredients that help Marianne reclaim her life. What things do you need in order to feel entirely, truly and deeply alive?
5. Religion, superstition and a woman’s wisdom: Some scenes in the book touch on spiritual planes beyond the realm of established religions. What role do such planes have to play in today’s world? How does belief in mythical forces, the invisible world beyond our physical one change the characters in *The Little French Bistro*?
6. Most often, we cannot change our lives from one day to the next by making only a single decision. Instead, it takes many small steps to explore a new path. What steps did Marianne take in *The Little French/Breton Bistro* that you were surprised by? Were there other paths you would you have liked to see Marianne take?
7. Love between people who “have a few more years under their belt than others” is rarely the subject of a novel. Why do we sometimes find it difficult to believe that older people are capable of the same insane longings, hopes, relationship troubles or desires as the young? Did you find the depiction of the lifestyles of these characters, most of whom are between 60 and 70 years old, relatable? Surprising?
8. Which of the characters in the book would you like to meet in real life? Where and on what occasion? What would you like to ask them?
9. It’s said that books have the power to heal. They can change lives and cast the world in a new light. Do you have the sense that *The Little French/Breton Bistro* has given you something that you could use in your life? Another perspective? A different understanding of culture? An idea that you have long wanted to try out in your life?
10. If you had the chance to ask the author a question, what would it be?

11. If the book were to be made into a movie, who would you cast in the different roles?

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Recommendations:

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- You might also enjoy *The Stars Are Fire*
(<http://www.booksamillion.com/p/9780345806369>)