

**FICTION BOOK CLUB**

*May 2019 Selection*

---

***The Immortalists* by Chloe Benjamin**

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 mystic 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.

The 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 struggles to maintain security as an army doctor post – 9/11; and bookish Varya throws herself into longevity research, where she tests the boundary between science and immortality.

Both a dazzling family love story and 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.

ISBN 9780735215092

**Discussion Questions:**

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, 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?



### **Review or Comment about this book:**

Help others with their decision to read this book by simply leaving your comments and reviews online at <http://www.booksamillion.com/p/9780735215092>

### **Recommendations:**

- If you liked *The Immortalists*, you might like *The Ninth Hour* (<http://www.booksamillion.com/p/9781250192745>)
- You might also enjoy *A Secret History of Witches* (<http://www.booksamillion.com/p/9780316508582>)