



LITERARY BOOK CLUB

October 2019 Selection

***How to Stop Time* by Matt Haig**

Tom Hazard has just moved back to London, his old home, to settle down and become a high school history teacher. And on his first day at school, he meets a captivating French teacher at his school who seems fascinated by him. But Tom has a dangerous secret. He may look like an ordinary 41-year-old, but owing to a rare condition, he's been alive for centuries. Tom has lived history--performing with Shakespeare, exploring the high seas with Captain Cook, and sharing cocktails with Fitzgerald. Now, he just wants an ordinary life.

Unfortunately for Tom, the Albatross Society, the secretive group which protects people like Tom, has one rule: Never fall in love. As painful memories of his past and the erratic behavior of the Society's watchful leader threaten to derail his new life and romance, the one thing he can't have just happens to be the one thing that might save him. Tom will have to decide once and for all whether to remain stuck in the past, or finally begin living in the present.

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Discussion Questions:

1. How does Tom Hazard feel about his life as an Albatross? What does he see as the draw-backs of great longevity? Would you want the kind of lifespan the Albas have? Let's say you were an Alba, how would you want to live your life, especially given the no-falling-in-love rule and the secrecy rule?
2. Of the historical personages Tom has met, eras he has lived through, and events he has witnessed, who or what do you find most interesting or engaging or disturbing?
3. Once back from Australia, Tom types an email to the biotech company investigating cellular damage in illnesses and ageing. He gives his age and



writes that he might be able to help with research. He saves it as a draft, but we never know whether he sends it. Should he?

4. What is your prediction for Tom and Camilla? Has it struck you, by the way, that the two women loved by Tom are named for flowers. (There's ... a ... symbol ... there ...)
5. What is the significance of the title, "How to Stop Time"? Some of the characters talk about stopping time, though for different reasons: mayflies because it goes by too quickly, Tom because he's had too much of it. Nonetheless, the title is "how" to stop it. What does Tom realize by the novel's end?

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Recommendations:

- If you liked *The Clockmaker's Daughter*, you might like [*Life After Life*](#)
- You might also enjoy [*The Immortalists*](#)