



BOOK CLUB KIT

Inside this kit is all you need to throw a kickass book club/Valentine's Day (or *anti*-Valentine's Day) party, including content from the good folks at Penguin Books: snack and cocktail recipes, a party playlist, and more.

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A LITTLE PRAISE

FOR *LOVE BY THE BOOK*. JUST A LITTLE.

“This is lots of fun. . . . **Honest, funny, and cringingly relatable.**” —*Glamour* (U.K.)

“A fun romantic comedy (or tragedy, depending on the day). **If you love *The Mindy Project*, imagine Mindy in London surrounded by British hotties, fabulous friends, and way too much bad dating advice.**” —KIM GRUENENFELDER, author of *A Total Waste of Makeup*

“Melissa Pimentel’s voice is wickedly funny and entirely appealing. **Reading *Love by the Book* is like taking a tour of London on the arm of an audacious and hilarious new friend**—in other words, a whole lot of fun!”

—MEG DONOHUE, *USA Today* bestselling author of *All the Summer Girls*

“**For fans of *Sex and the City***, Pimentel offers a fictionalized account of a real-life experiment in dating.” —*Kirkus Reviews*

“***Love by the Book* feels like a no-holds-barred girls’ night.** I found myself laughing out loud at every turn. Melissa Pimentel is a great new voice. She’ll go far!”

—CARA LOCKWOOD, *USA Today* bestselling author of *I Do (But I Don’t)*

“Who hasn’t wondered whether if they just hit on the precise formula, they’d find the right man? . . . I often found myself laughing out loud and quickly turning the pages to find out what that month’s dictum would have Lauren doing. **A fun, fast-paced read.**”

—CATHERINE MCKENZIE, bestselling author of *Hidden and Arranged*

“**Wincingly honest and hilariously perceptive**, *Love by the Book* is a fresh, funny, clever take on dating, relating and finding love.”

—ANNA MAXTED, bestselling author of *Getting Over It and Running in Heels*

“I loved this book! So smart and sassy but with a great big heart, too. It sends up the whole game of modern romance by applying Harvard Business School techniques, Victorian dating rules, and Flapper ideology to the Tinder age. **You’ll go through this book as quickly as Lauren swipes left on her iPhone.**” —NAOMI WOOD, author of *Mrs. Hemingway*

“***Love by the Book* hits its humor beats in all the right places**, and I love when someone comes up with an idea that prompts me to say ‘I wish I had thought of that.’ Pimentel’s ‘experiment’ proves that the best book on love is the one you write yourself along the way.”

—ELISA LORELLO, bestselling author of *Faking It* and *She Has Your Eyes*

COCKTAILS

RELATIONSHIP ON THE ROCKS

1 ½ oz gin

1 ½ oz sweet vermouth

1 ½ oz Campari

Dash of orange bitters

Serve on the rocks with orange twist.

THE ADRIAN

Equal parts:

Sparkling wine

Grapefruit juice

Serve chilled in a champagne glass.

FIRST DATE COURAGE (A SHOT)

1 ½ oz vodka

1 ½ oz lime juice

½ oz triple sec

¾ oz cranberry juice

Shake ingredients with ice and serve in shot glasses.

“MANNERS FOR WOMEN” MOCKTAIL

2 cups raspberries

2 tbsp sugar

½ cup lemon juice

½ cup seltzer

2 bottles of ginger beer

Muddle 1 ½ cups of raspberries with sugar in a pitcher. Pour in ginger beer and seltzer, add remaining raspberries and lemon juice, and serve on the rocks.

SNACKS

“MEN ARE THE DEVIL”-ED EGGS

6 hardboiled eggs, peeled and cut lengthwise

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup mayonnaise

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp dry ground mustard

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp white vinegar

Pinch of salt

$\frac{1}{4}$ tsp black pepper

Paprika

Remove yolks into a small bowl and mash with a fork. Mix in mayo, mustard, vinegar, salt, and pepper. Fill empty egg whites with yolk mixture and sprinkle with paprika. Refrigerate covered in plastic wrap for up to 1 day before serving.

BLIND DATES

24 large pitted dates

2 tbsp heavy cream

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup blue cheese

12 slices thick-cut bacon

Preheat oven to 400 degrees F. Slice the dates $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way down lengthwise. In a small bowl, use a fork to mix the cheese and heavy cream. Press a small scoop of cheese mixture into the dates and close them back up. Cut each piece of bacon in half and wrap a halved strip around each date. Secure with a toothpick and place on baking sheet. Bake until bacon is crisp, 15-20 minutes.

BREAK UP BINGO

Dating is the worst. Winner gets the last bottle of wine.
She's earned it.

Instructions:

Mark an "X" if any of this heinous shit has happened to you.

You have a first date with an "aspiring ____"	You and your friend got the same OkCupid message from the same person	You've done "The Fadeout"
You received a text meant for another woman	You have an engagement ring	You got dumped right before the holidays
You get matched with your best friend on Tinder	You've been introduced as a "friend" after more than 3 months into a relationship	You've never had a date on Valentine's Day

LOVE BY THE BOOK PARTY PLAYLIST

INDEPENDENT WOMEN, PT. 1 by Destiny's Child

NO SCRUBS by TLC

IRREPLACEABLE by Beyoncé

JUST A GIRL by No Doubt

I WILL SURVIVE by Gloria Gaynor

STRONGER (WHAT DOESN'T KILL YOU) by Kelly Clarkson

GIRLS JUST WANT TO HAVE FUN by Cyndi Lauper

THESE BOOTS ARE MADE FOR WALKING by Nancy Sinatra

BORDERLINE by Madonna

IT'S NOT RIGHT BUT IT'S OK by Whitney Houston

FIGHTER by Christina Aguilera

SINCE U BEEN GONE by Kelly Clarkson

SINGLE LADIES by Beyoncé

FORGET YOU by Cee Lo Green

LOVE ME OR LEAVE ME by Nina Simone

CRY ME A RIVER by Justin Timberlake

YOU OUGHTA KNOW by Alanis Morissette

BLOW ME (ONE LAST KISS) by P!nk

A conversation with Melissa Pimentel, author of

LOVE BY THE BOOK

What type of research did you do for this book? Were there any guides or approaches you came across that didn't make it into the final novel?

The novel sprung from my own experience of trying out different dating guides and blogging about the results—my “summer of scientific experiment,” as I like to call it—so I already had a good idea of how some of these guides worked and the results they produced.

The rest was done by trawling through websites and archives for the best (or worst, depending on your point of view) dating guides throughout the ages. I thought it was important to get a snapshot of how social mores have evolved over the years, so I chose guides that were popular in their time—like *The Technique of the Love Affair*, which was the 1920s flapper's courtship bible—to see how they'd fare today.

There were a few books that didn't make the cut because they were too similar to guides I'd already covered, or I just ran out of time! One in particular that I was sad to have missed was a guide—written by former celebrity bodyguard Big Boom—called *If You Want Closure in Your Relationship, Start with Your Legs*. I mean, how can you not be intrigued by that title? But it tread on familiar ground, so I left it out. I'm still a little sad about missing that one.

What was the most shocking or misguided piece of dating advice you encountered?

I think some of the most alarming advice I found was in *Rules of the Game*, a guide aimed at men and stemming from the pickup artist scene. The whole PUA trend has always seemed a little sketchy to me, and this book confirmed my suspicions. While some of the advice—like being more confident and putting yourself out there more—is valid and helpful, other tips—like encouraging men to chip away at a woman's self-confidence by “negging” her—are pretty worrying. It plays up to the whole idea that women love alpha males (which is true in some cases), but seems to ignore the fact that women don't particularly like being insulted by some random dude at a bar. It was fun to imagine how a woman would use this advice on men, and what the response would be, but I definitely wouldn't recommend it to anyone—male or female—in real life unless you want to come across like a real asshole.

What was the most helpful piece of dating advice you encountered?

There is definitely merit in the idea that everyone likes a chase, and that coming on too strong is a turn-off. I think this is true for both men and women—I've had so many female friends tell me that they went on a great date with a guy and were subsequently repelled by that guy being a little too keen. I guess it's that old Groucho Marx adage about not wanting to belong to any club that would have you as a member. So playing it cool would be my number one piece of advice. Don't call or text him constantly. Don't bombard him with suggestions for adorable date venues, or force him to have a conversation about commitment after two dates. Let him do some of the work.

Of course, I think all of this flies out the window when two people meet and fall hard for each other—then all bets are off and it's totally acceptable to text each other surreptitiously under your desk at work all day.

What is it like to be an American writing about London? Do you find you have a different perspective on the place and its people than a U.K. native?

I think lots of Americans suffer from a severe case of Anglophilia—it's something to do with the accent and the conviction that they're more intelligent and witty than us, a weird hangover from Colonial times—so I definitely brought that with me when I first moved here and I'm sure that bleeds into my writing. I'm sure I approach England with a bit more romanticism than someone who was born and raised here; what could be construed as dilapidated is usually seen as adorably quaint through my eyes. That said, I've lived in London for ten years now so I've gained a fair bit of resident grouchiness, but I still find certain things charming where a native might find them banal and/or irritating.

In the book, Lauren dates men from several different countries—England, the U.S., Ireland, etc.—and one lady from France. Do you think any of the culture differences between these places manifest in the romantic realm, and if yes, how so?

Not to make sweeping cultural generalizations or anything, but I think there's definitely a difference between dating in the U.K. and dating in the U.S. American dating tends to be a bit more formal: there's a pretty clear process and you usually know where you stand with American men (though there are obviously exceptions). In the U.K., there are no rules. Seriously, the dating scene is largely just a drunken free-for-all. It has its merits, for sure, but can also be a little hard to navigate as an outsider. I've never actually dated any Irishmen or French ladies in real life, but I imagine Irish dating to be super fun, with lots of pub lock-ins and witty banter and sing-alongs, and French dating would probably involve lots of Gauloises-smoking and deep conversations about existentialism. Again, not to make sweeping cultural generalizations or anything . . .

Many of the characters treat Lauren with a certain amount of disdain and condescension when they find out about her project. It seems like many people find love and romance an unworthy topic of reflection and discovery, yet it dominates so much of human experience. What do you make of this prejudice, and what would you say to those who are dismissive of romantic comedies?

I'm going to put my feminist hat on now and say that the tendency to view romance—and women's fiction in general—as an inferior, frivolous genre comes from a wider tendency to trivialize female experience. These are traditionally seen as “feminine” interests and therefore aren't deemed “serious” . . . though if a man writes about love or sex or relationships, it's a different story.

I also think that there's an unfair and incorrect perception out there that romantic comedies don't have artistic merit. Personally, I love them and think that, if done well, they can be some of the most satisfying and enjoyable reading/viewing experiences around. Think of Jane Austen, or pretty much any film starring Kathryn Hepburn and Cary Grant, and you'll see that there's excellence to be found.

I also don't think there's anything wrong with embracing the trivial. Our lives are dominated by the trivial. Most of us spend our lives examining and rehashing and sharing the stupid, silly, funny things that happen to us every day (particularly those of a romantic nature) so I don't see why we shouldn't find these things interesting or enjoyable in fiction form. “Vive la frippery!,” that's what I say.

Love by the Book was inspired by your real life blog in which you documented your attempts to date while following actual dating guides. What was the experience like of fictionalizing a story that was very familiar to you? Did you find it made you see your own experiences through a new light?

It was actually lots of fun to fictionalize the blog, because I got to relive a really entertaining period of my life and also change/embellish/invent things as I went along. I made Lauren do things I would never have had the courage to do myself, and placed her in hilarious, awkward situations that I was glad not to have suffered through. And yes, I did see my own experiences through a new light. When I was doing the project myself, I never really thought about my motivation or intentions (I've never been very good at introspection), but when I was finishing up the novel, I suddenly realized that I had probably written the blog as a way to force myself out into the scary world of dating again. I also think it probably had something to do with getting over the breakup of a previous long-term relationship, though I'm trying not to dig too deep into that one!

Any interesting stories from those blogging days? Did your dates ever find out about your blog?

I collected loads of weird and funny anecdotes when writing the blog, but the most unexpected and exciting thing I found was my now-fiancé. I met him while following a (thankfully very permissive) 1960s dating guide and we fell in love pretty much instantly . . . which was amazing in almost every way but also slightly annoying because it meant that I had to give up the blog, which I was having so much fun with. Every rose has its thorn, I guess. I told him about the blog and the experiment about a month after we started dating, and he was great about it. He went home and read the whole blog straight away and, when he was finished, he just said "I love it. Don't ever change." It was a huge relief and completely reinforced how I felt about him and the choice I'd made. I feel like "don't ever change" should be a requisite statement in every good relationship.

Lauren is obsessed with a lot of different authors—who are some of your favorite authors, and who would you say is an influence in *Love by the Book*?

This is such a hard question! I think the clearest influence for me has been *Bridget Jones's Diary*. I recently reread it and it's just as clever and hilarious as it was the first time I read it. Helen Fielding is a comedic genius. In a more general sense, I really love the writing of Margaret Atwood, Jane Austen, Nancy Mitford (another comedic genius), Kate Atkinson, Lorrie Moore . . . I could go on and on. I promise I do like some male authors, too—just none spring to mind at the minute!

What's your next project? Do you think we'll be reading about more adventures with Lauren Cunningham?

I'm currently working on a new book—it's still early days so I don't want to say too much about it, but it's loosely based on one of my favorite novels. Sadly Lauren doesn't feature in it. I think I'm going to let her have her happily ever after and live in peace!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Did any of the dating guides Lauren consulted seem appealing and if so, why?
2. What do you think of the idea of a dating guide, in general? Is it possible to give universal advice when it comes to affairs of the heart, and if so, why?
3. What did you make of the other relationships in the book—Tristan and Lucy, Meghan and her wife, Lauren's parents, Cathryn and her fiancé?
4. Would you say there was some common thread of success between these partnerships? A common thread of conflict?
5. How did each new approach change the type of person Lauren attracted? Do you ever find yourself changing your behavior to encourage or repel different types of people?
6. Lauren's dating life consists of a pretty health combination of extreme joy and profound loneliness. Is there a benefit to the loneliness, and if so, how does it affect the moments of joy?
7. What is Lauren's attitude toward casual sex, and how does she evaluate it through the lens of each guide? Do you think our culture's approach to this has changed recently and if so what is responsible for that change?
8. What is the relationship between love and sex in a romantic partnership, and can you have one without the other?
9. Given Lauren's love of literature, did you find that any of her romantic partners had similarities to well-known fictional characters? If so, which ones?
10. If you had to choose one of Lauren's partners for dinner, a movie, and drinks, who would it be and why?
11. Do you think Lauren's story would be different if it was set in New York City? San Francisco? Cleveland? Or is a book about dating messy and terrible and wonderful no matter where it's set?