

Me
BEFORE
You
Jojo
Moyes

BOOK CLUB KIT

* WELCOME! *

Inside this kit is exclusive material directly from Jojo Moyes, and other suggestions to make your book club a smashing success.

Me BEFORE You

BOOK CLUB RECIPES

** Sure to make your book club a hit! **

Thyme for Tea (serves 6)

- * 6oz. vodka
- * 1 bag Earl Grey tea
- * 10 fresh thyme sprigs, divided
- * 4 tablespoons honey
- * 4 tablespoons warm water
- * Ice
- * Prosecco

Place Earl Grey tea in vodka and allow to soak for 1 hour. Remove teabag. Muddle 4 thyme sprigs in cocktail shaker. Mix honey and warm water. Add honey mixture and infused vodka to shaker. Shake all ingredients with ice and strain into a flute. Top with Prosecco and garnish with remaining thyme sprigs.

Drink responsibly.

Lemon Cream Tart

- * 1 large egg white
- * 2 tablespoons stick margarine
- * 3 tablespoons sugar
- * 3 cups reduced-fat vanilla wafer crumbs (about 36 cookies)
- * Cooking spray
- * 3 large eggs
- * 1 (14-ounce) can low-fat sweetened condensed milk (not evaporated skim milk)
- * 1 tablespoon grated lemon rind
- * 1/2 cup fresh lemon juice
- * 1 cup frozen reduced-calorie whipped topping, thawed and divided
- * 10 lemon rind strips (optional)
- * Mint leaves (optional)

Preheat oven to 325°.

Combine first 3 ingredients and beat at high speed of a mixer until blended. Add crumbs and toss with a fork until moist.

Press crumb mixture into bottom and up sides of a 9-inch round tart pan coated with cooking spray. Bake at 325° for 15 minutes or until lightly browned. Let cool on a wire rack.

Combine eggs, milk, lemon rind, and juice in a bowl, stirring with a whisk until blended. Pour mixture into prepared crust. Bake at 325° for 30 minutes or until filling is set. Let cool completely. Top with whipped topping. Garnish with lemon rind strips and mint, if desired.



Me BEFORE You

PLAYLIST

* Posted on Viking's Tumblr *
<http://tinyurl.com/MBY-Playlist>

MOZART

Laudate Dominum

GORECKI

Symphony No. 3

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

The Lark Ascending

FAURÉ

"Paradisum" from Requiem Op. 48

PURCELL

"When I am laid in earth" from Dido and Aeneas

VIVALDI

"Spring" from The Four Seasons

Me BEFORE You

READER'S GUIDE

An Introduction to *Me Before You*, by Jojo Moyes

“The thing about being catapulted into a whole new life—or at least, shoved up so hard against someone else’s life that you might as well have your face pressed against their window—is that it forces you to rethink your idea of who you are” (p. 58).

Louisa Clark never wanted to leave her job at the Buttered Bun. After six years, she felt secure in the routine of making tea and chatting with the café’s regulars. But when her boss closes the business, the unskilled twenty-six-year-old must take a new job as a paid companion to a wealthy ex-Master of the Universe, who is wheelchair bound after an accident. Prickly and embittered, Will Traynor nonetheless opens Louisa’s eyes to the limitations she has imposed upon her life—and the infinite possibilities that only love can awaken.

A few short years earlier, Will was a major corporate player who bought and sold companies for obscene profits. He climbed mountains and dated cover girls. All that changed after a speeding motorcycle crushed his spine. Paralyzed from the neck down and even unable to feed himself, Will’s life as he knows it is over—and he is not interested in exploring a new one.

Louisa feels intimidated by Will, his commanding mother, Camilla, and the Traynors’ grand home, but the position pays a lot more than her waitressing job did and her family doesn’t hesitate to remind Lou that she has few options otherwise.

At first, Will resents Louisa’s very presence. When he destroys a shelf full of pictures, Louisa tries to repair the damage. Furious, he lashes out, “It would be nice—just for once—if someone paid attention to what I wanted. Me smashing those photographs was not an accident” (p. 56). Yet, the blowout is a turning point. Louisa stops trying to second-guess Will’s decisions, but also refuses to bear the brunt of his frustration.

Louisa is accustomed to putting herself last. Her parents never hid the fact that they considered Louisa’s younger sister, Treena, to be the more intelligent sibling. Patrick—Louisa’s boyfriend of six years—is a self-absorbed personal trainer concerned only with his performance in the next triathlon. As she and Will grow closer, he convinces her that she deserves more respect from everyone in her life, including herself. Still, Lou has her reasons for wanting things to stay the same as they have always been.

When Lou learns that Will has shocking plans of his own, she sets out to show him that life is still worth living. She begins researching technologies that can give him more autonomy and looking for outings that he might find appealing. Each for the other’s sake, Louisa and Will push beyond their comfort zones and, in turn, change each other in ways that neither could ever have anticipated.

As inspiring as it is heartbreaking, *Me Before You* is Jojo Moyes’s international bestselling breakout novel—and the captivating tale of two people whose improbable romance sets them both free.

Jojo Moyes is the author of several books, including The Last Letter from Your Lover. She lives with her husband and children in Essex, England.

Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. If you were Louisa, would you have quit working for the Traynors? If yes, at what point?
2. Were you able to relate to the way Will felt after his accident? What about his outlook on life did you find most difficult to understand or accept?
3. Discuss the meaning of the novel's title. To whom do the "me" and "you" refer?
4. Louisa often finds Mrs. Traynor cold and judgmental. Is there an appropriate way to behave in Mrs. Traynor's situation?
5. What is your opinion of Mr. Traynor? Did it change after you read his side of the story?
6. Why is Louisa able to reach Will when so many others could not?
7. Were you as surprised as Lou to learn of Will's plans?
8. Compare Louisa's relationship with Treena to Will's relationship with Georgina. Do siblings know one another any better simply because they are related?
9. Would Patrick have asked Louisa to move in with him if he hadn't felt threatened by Will? If Louisa had never accepted her job with the Traynors, where would her relationship with Patrick have gone?
10. Discuss Louisa's own secret ties to the castle. Would most girls in her situation have blamed themselves? Should Treena have behaved differently in the aftermath?
11. What did you make of the way Lou's mother, Josie, judges Lou's decisions regarding Will. Is Josie's reaction fair?
12. Before his accident, Will was a philanderer and a corporate raider who would probably never have given Louisa a second look. Why is it that people are so often unable to see what's truly important until they've experienced loss?

Q & A with **JOJO MOYES**,
author of
Me BEFORE You



photo: Phyllis Christopher

Tell us a little about where your ideas for your characters and their stories come from.

They come from all over the place. It's often a snippet of conversation or a news story that just lodges in my head and won't go away. Sometimes I get an idea for a character too, and then unconsciously start knitting them together. *Me Before You* is the most "high concept" book I've ever written—in that I could describe it in two sentences. But most of them are a lot more organic and just contain lots of ideas and things that I've pulled together. With this book I think the issue of quality of life was probably to the front of my mind as I had two relatives who were facing life in care homes, and I know that in one case she would probably have chosen any alternative to that existence.

Which of the characters in *Me Before You* do you identify with the most?

Well, there's definitely a bit of Lou in there. I did have a pair of stripy tights that I loved as a child! I think you have to identify with all your characters to some extent, or they just don't come off the page properly. But I also identify with Camilla a bit. As a mother I can't imagine the choice she has to make, and I could imagine in those circumstances you would just shut down a bit emotionally.

What made you choose to set *Me Before You* in a small historical town with a castle at its center?

I tried all sorts of settings for this book. I drove all over Scotland, trying to find a castle and a small town that would "fit." It was essential that Lou came from a small town, rather than a city, because I live in one myself and I'm fascinated by the way that growing up in one can be the greatest comfort—and also incredibly stifling. I wanted a castle because it was the purest example of old money rubbing up against ordinary people. Britain is still incredibly hide-bound by class, and we only really notice it when we go to a place where it doesn't exist in the same way, like the U.S. or Australia. I needed the class difference between Will and Lou to be clear.

We love the way you draw the social distinction between Lou's working-class upbringing and Will's upper-class background. Did you do that deliberately to introduce humor into what could otherwise have been a deeply tragic situation?

Yes I did. I thought that the subject was so bleak potentially that it was important to have a lot of humor in the book. But it adds a useful tension to the narrative too: offsetting the warmth and chaos of Lou's home life with the more formal and reserved nature of Will's relationship with his parents. And it gives Lou an added reason to feel totally out of her depth once she arrives there. From the point of the reader, it also gives Will a subtle advantage that is vital if we are to see him as Lou's equal and not just an object of pity.

Your books always have an incredibly moving love story at the heart of them. What is it about the emotional subject of love that makes you want to write about it?

I have no idea! I'm not very romantic in real life. I guess love is the thing that makes us do the most extraordinary things—the emotion that can bring us highest or lowest, or be the most transformative—and extremes of emotion are always interesting to write about. Plus I'm too wimpy to write horror.

Have you ever cried while writing a scene in any of your books?

Always. If I don't cry while writing a key emotional scene, my gut feeling is it's failed. I want the reader to feel something while reading—and making myself cry has become my litmus test as to whether that's working. It's an odd way to earn a living.

Where do you write? Do you set hours or just put pen to paper when inspiration strikes?

I work in roughly set hours, but with three children and a lot of animals I've found you have to be flexible. If there are no disruptions I roll out of bed and straight to my desk and work from 6am to 7:30am, and then again after I've done the animals from roughly 10am to 2:30pm. My ideal time to work would be from 3pm to 10pm—but unfortunately that only happens if I go away and hide in a hotel.

When you form characters do you ever incorporate aspects from people you know?

Yes—but often without realizing. Luckily if you write a negative character trait people are rarely likely to recognize themselves. More often though the characters have elements of myself which I then stretch and exaggerate until they become their own. Lou, for example, contains something of the character I could well have been if I had married the man I got engaged to at 17. I would have led a very different life.

Who would be in your dream book club? Where would you meet and what would you talk about?

Oh, wow. If I can have dead and living writers, I'd have Anaïs Nin, Hemingway, Xenophon, Haruki Murakami, Jessica Mitford, and Nora Ephron. We'd meet in a smoky bar in Paris and I'd probably not say very much at all. I'd be awestruck and just sit there and listen.

Do any other writers inspire you?

Yes. I love Kate Atkinson for her inventiveness, and because as a reader you can give yourself over to a plot that seems to go everywhere, trusting that she will bring the ends together in the most satisfactory and unexpected ways. I love Barbara Kingsolver for her use of language and Nora Ephron for her wit and the way she writes about the business of love and being human.

It's always tricky reading too much of the writers who inspire you though; sometimes they're so good you just want to give up and go and work in a chicken factory instead.

When you're not writing, how do you like to spend your time?

I ride my ex-racehorse, Brian, and try to just hang out with my children without muttering: "I'll be with you in a minute... I've just got to finish this..." A dream weekend, however, would be spent alone with my husband in Le Marais, Paris.

Me BEFORE You TOUR

Monday, January 7, Mystic, CT, Bank Square Books 7PM

Tuesday, January 8, Wichita, KS, Watermark Books 7PM

Thursday, January 10, Manhattan Beach, CA, Pages: A Bookstore 7PM

Friday, January 11, Danville, CA, Rakestraw Books 12PM

Friday, January 11, Corte Madera, CA, Book Passage 7PM

Saturday, January 12, Oakland, CA, A Great Good Place for Books 7PM

Monday, January 14, Houston, TX, Blue Willow Bookshop 7pm

Tuesday, January 15, Kansas, City, KS, Rainy Day Books 7pm

**Twitter Event with @JojoMoyes and @LitChat!
Friday, February 15, 4-5pm EST, #LitChat**