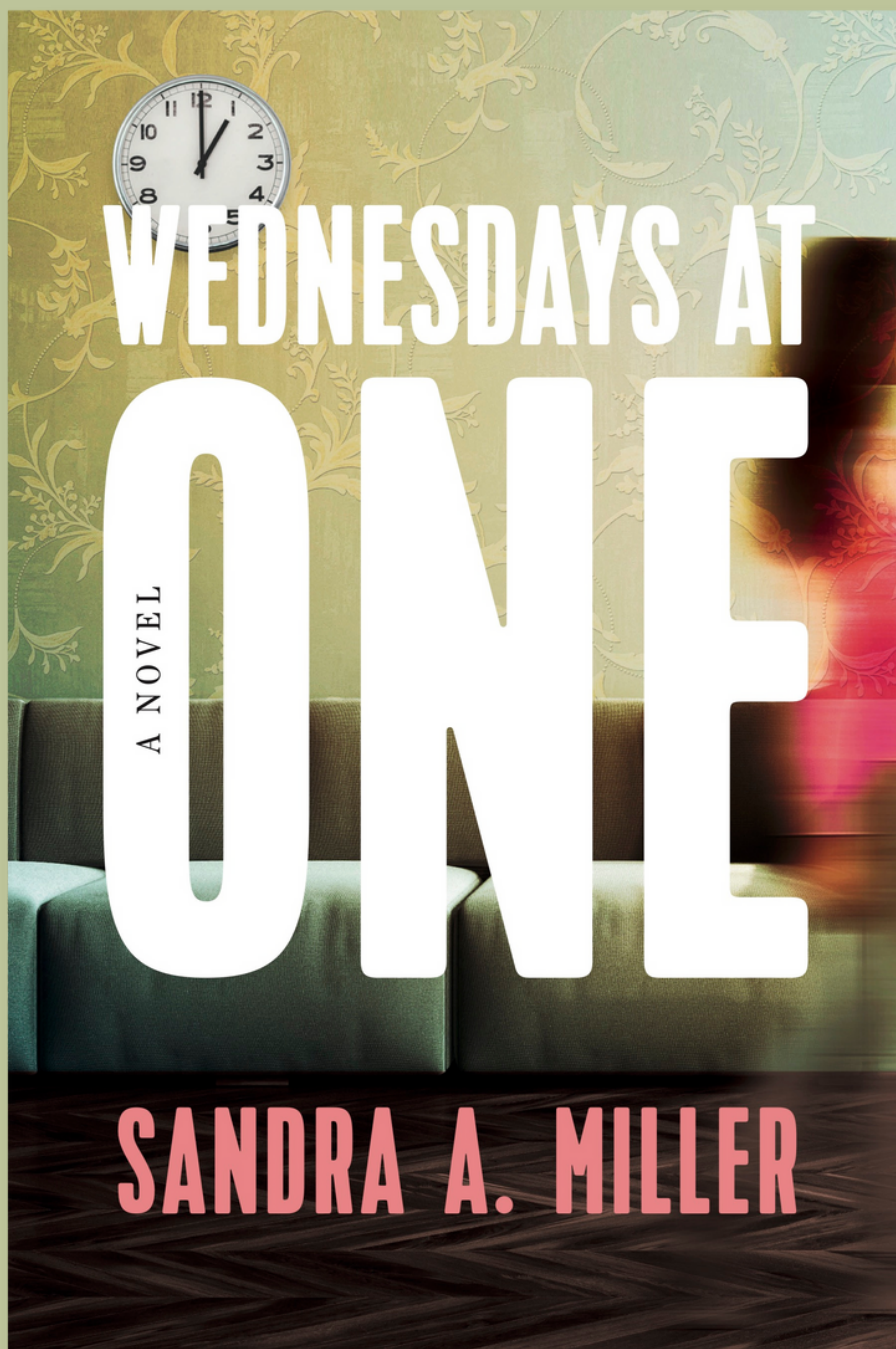


BOOK CLUB KIT



SANDRA A. MILLER

GET READY TO HOST YOUR BOOK CLUB KIT!

We're so glad you've decided to host a *Wednesdays at One* book gathering! Inside this kit you'll find a Q&A with Sandra, discussion questions for the book, a couple recipes, and a bonus set of questions to start digging into each other's pasts (no therapy needed). Stories are best when shared, and we hope your time together is fun and engaging!

If you're new to hosting a book event, don't worry! We've got you covered. Here's what you'll need to do to get ready for your gathering:

- Determine if you'll meet virtually or in-person.
- Save the date!
- Reach out to your local bookstore. You can direct your guests to purchase the book through the store ahead of time or coordinate with the store and have them sell the books at your event.
- Invite friends! Make sure your guests know they're welcome to attend even if they haven't read or finished the book!
- Plan to have some food and drinks, but don't stress about this! Keep it easy by grabbing some cheese and crackers. Or go all out with homemade snacks and treats—we've even included a few recipes inspired by the book. You could also divide and conquer by asking a few close friends to bring an appetizer or dessert!
- Relax and have fun! Book clubs are enjoyable because of the connections, not the cocktails or the charcuterie board. Allow everyone a chance to share or ask questions. Be mindful of those who haven't had a chance to read the book by discussing the themes rather than the specifics.

READING GUIDE

1. When we meet Gregory, he's already asking for forgiveness, though it's not yet clear what for.

How did this color your initial impressions of Gregory? Did you have any predictions of what he was hoping he'd be forgiven for?

2. Mira's arrival is obviously jarring for Gregory, though he can't seem to figure out why.

Why do you think Mira stuck so easily in Gregory's head? Did you have any predictions about who Mira was when you began the book?

3. In Chapter 3, Phil stops by the house with freshly baked bread. Gregory has an opportunity to tell him about Mira but doesn't.

Why do you think Gregory kept Mira a secret from Phil? What do you think would have been different if Phil had known?

4. In their second session, Mira accuses Gregory of not being well enough to help her and not communicating honestly. Did you expect this encounter? Did you wonder how Mira understood Gregory's internal struggle?

5. Liv and Gregory's first date is in a cemetery, though they've already known each other for a few months. While they're there, Gregory starts to tell Liv about the hit-and-run his friend Joey was involved in, but her reaction stops him from telling the whole story.

What do you think would have happened if Gregory had told Liv everything right then? Do you think it would have changed their relationship?

6. While Gregory, Liv, and Carrie are visiting Gregory's father for his birthday, Gregory's sister Margaret asks him to carry a package and tells him to be careful because it's breakable. The author writes, "Gregory lifted the package, feeling the thin glass through the wrapping. Everything felt so fragile these days."

What was it about Gregory's life that felt fragile or breakable? What could he have done to keep it from feeling that way? How do you think this statement related to both Gregory's relationship with Mira and his relationship with his family?



READING GUIDE

7. When Phil arrives in the office at the same time that Mira is scheduled, Mira doesn't show up. Gregory and Phil have a tense conversation and then, once Phil leaves, there's Mira.

Why was Gregory and Phil's conversation so fraught? Did their interaction surprise you, or did you expect it?

8. In Chapter 14, we learn more about Liv and Gregory's early relationship, including their first intimate night together. The author writes, "Lately, the shelter of sexual healing had declined with her waning libido, his demanding work schedule, and the unpredictable comings and goings of hyperaware teenagers in a creaky Victorian that failed to hide sounds. He wasn't so keen anymore, either. Not with Liv. He feared if he left himself be vulnerable, she'd finally figure him out."

Why was Gregory so afraid of Liv figuring him out after all the years of their marriage? Why do you think he was able to be vulnerable with her (at least sexually) in the beginning of their relationship? What changed?

9. Gregory's conversation with Margaret while their father is stabilizing opens him up and maybe clarifies some of his feelings.

What about their conversation was revelatory to you? Why do you think their conversation led to Gregory buying a mattress to sleep on in the garage?

10. After catching Carrie smoking weed with her friend Jessie, Gregory gives her the option to tell her mother or spend the whole day with him without her phone. He even allows her to drink the alcohol she and Jessie had ordered with Jessie's fake ID.

Did you respect Gregory's handling of the situation? How did their day together impact Carrie? How did it impact Gregory?

11. When Gregory's father is dying, Gregory is more concerned with returning to Cambridge to speak to Mira, and it causes problems between himself and Carrie, Liv, and Margaret.

Why was it so important for Gregory to see Mira, especially when he'd already left her a note? Do you think he could have handled the situation with his family differently?



READING GUIDE

12. Gregory's final conversation with Mira allows him to forgive himself, but it has a dramatic impact on his relationship with Liv.

Why do you think Liv was listening to Gregory's conversation outside of his office? Could Gregory have prevented things from ending up this way?

13. At his father's funeral, Gregory finally tells his story, and Joey's.

Why was this decision important to Gregory? Do you think it changed how his family felt about him?

14. In Chapter 33, we learn that Phil knew Mira when she was alive.

How does this change how Gregory sees Phil? What about how he sees Mira?

15. In the end, Gregory takes Liv to see Mira's headstone in order to try and explain to her what happened.

How did Liv's reaction make you feel? Do you agree with Liv's response?

16. What about this book was surprising to you? What *wasn't* surprising?

17. How did this book make you think differently about healing and trauma?

18. What would you do if one day a ghost from your past showed up?



Q&A WITH SANDRA

1. Your book is referred to as a “psychological thriller”—literally! Your main character is a psychologist. What psychological thrillers have you read and enjoyed?

I've devoured some good ones recently, including *Secluded Cabin Sleeps Six* by Lisa Unger, *The Holdout* by Graham Moore, and Julie Clark's *The Lies I Tell*, which kept my head spinning, until I didn't know who was who and what was what. But the very first psychological thriller I ever read was Daphne du Maurier's classic, *Rebecca*. I was in 7th grade and had never experienced such a twisty, suspenseful book, one that made me feel like I was uncovering secrets—as a good thriller should. I had to find out what was going on with those characters whose realities kept shifting in dark, unexpected ways. I recently reread *Rebecca* and realized it had influenced me even more than I knew.

2. Where did the idea for *Wednesdays at One* come from?

In the summer of 2020, I experienced a three-month bout of vertigo and wasn't able to write anything, or even look at the computer without getting dizzy. Every morning, I shut my eyes and did morning pages from Julia Cameron's book, *The Artist's Way*. If you aren't familiar with her book, the task entails writing three longhand, uncensored pages in a notebook first thing after waking. It's a stream-of-consciousness dump meant to clear the mind and lay the groundwork for creativity. It worked. When the vertigo lifted, this story about a psychologist who was quietly atoning for a horrific mistake in his youth just came to me—fully formed. When the characters showed up, I knew I had to tell their story.

3. What was your writing process like?

Remember the summer of 2020 when there was nothing to do and nowhere to go? We were taking walks with friends six feet apart and wiping our take-out boxes with Clorox. Well, every day, I woke up early and wrote 1000 words. Then —because I have summers off from teaching—I had the rest of the day to do whatever else needed my attention. If you write 1000 words a day for three months, you'll have 90,000 words, about the length of a novel.

So, while many people didn't like that long quarantine, it was in some unexpected way a dream for writers like me who love to socialize but also crave alone time. With the socializing gone from the equation, there was nothing to do but write.



Q&A WITH SANDRA

4. How is writing from the perspective of Gregory, a male character, different from other things you've written? What was it like to write from the perspective of a character whose gender is different from your own?

I don't think it's a stretch for a writer to be able to create characters whose lives are completely different from theirs. That said, I've often thought about reincarnation and believe we've all lived as people of different ethnicities, religions, socio-economic classes, and genders. And maybe our souls remember some of those experiences.

Whether or not that's true, it's my privilege as a writer to imagine characters of every type, and to do what it takes to make them real on the page. It's funny you ask about Gregory. When this story first came to me, I tried writing it from the perspective of the woman client who visits the psychologist, but that didn't work. Her voice was wrong and sounded accusatory. I knew this needed to be from Gregory's quiet, guilt-ridden perspective. He is the opposite of me, but I thoroughly enjoyed inhabiting his character.

5. What books or authors provided inspiration while you were writing *Wednesdays at One*?

When I sit down to write, I feel as though every influential book I've ever read is with me, and that knowledge is there to draw on, if only subconsciously. I didn't draw inspiration from any specific texts while writing *Wednesdays at One*, but I often thought about thrillers that have gripped me, and how the authors achieved that magic mix of literary and propulsive writing. There are two couldn't-put-down psychological thrillers that I know have made it into my subconscious: *Gone Girl* by Gillian Flynn and *The Secret History* by Donna Tartt.

6. Why was Gregory's profession important to his character? What was it like to write about a psychologist who was dealing with some psychologically difficult experiences?

When I created Gregory, that was the only thing I was sure about: he was a psychologist. That was at the center of this story. The fact that my husband of twenty-five years is a psychologist gave me loads of material to work with. Although Mark is—thankfully—absolutely nothing like my protagonist, I have learned so much from him about the profession, about session dynamics, and what it's like to have to set aside your own emotional pain sometimes in order to focus on the client. This is something my character Gregory does very well, until someone comes in and starts poking at his deepest wound. I loved imagining those scenes in which Gregory tries to take control of a session, but Mira keeps undermining his authority by seeing through his cover and calling him out on it.

Q&A WITH SANDRA

7. Your first book was a memoir. How was writing *Wednesdays at One* different? Was it more challenging to write a memoir or a novel?

When you write a memoir, you have to retraumatize yourself over and over in order to remember the story accurately and capture the most important and revealing details on the page. You have to sit at your desk and put yourself through some of the worst experiences of your life, until every scene is as emotionally alive and true as you can make it. Doing that is harder for me than writing fiction.

The hard part about writing a novel is making something out of absolutely nothing, but that's also the joyful part. I like creating characters and letting them get in all kinds of trouble—the worst kinds. It's not necessarily easy for me to sit down and write fiction, but it's more fun than the internal work of mining my trauma for stories. Final answer: writing *Wednesdays at One* in three months was a romp in the park compared to the seven years I worked on *Trove*.

8. What advice would you give someone who wants to write their own novel?

There's a difference between wanting to do something and having to do something. I have friends who have spent years writing books that have never sold, but they still have to do it. In fact, they might want to quit, but they can't. That was me for a long time when I was trying to get my memoir published. The pain of rejection was devastating—but not as unbearable as giving up the thing I loved to do: write. So my advice would be this: if you want to try writing a novel, then go for it. Set a goal. Arrange your life so there is built-in writing time. Connect with writers, take classes, go to workshops, and work your craft tirelessly. If it catches, you will soon know the addiction—what it feels like to have to do it.

9. What are some of the books you've been reading recently? Any books you're looking forward to?

I listen to audiobooks when I take walks, and bestselling upmarket fiction keeps my feet moving on a cold winter day. *Black Cake* by Charmaine Wilkerson was a wonderful listen, as was *Demon Copperhead* by Barbara Kingsolver. On my nightstand, I have *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* and a pile of Agatha Christie novels from the library. I first read *And Then There Were None* in high school and it stayed with me for years. Who doesn't love a book that keeps you guessing until the very last page?



Q&A WITH SANDRA

10. Are you doing more writing? What other projects are coming up for you?

I am working on a complicated, psychological novel called *The Other Choice*. It's about a woman, Ruby Link, who reluctantly gives up her chance to have a baby when she marries her musician boyfriend, Cab. But then Ruby learns that her reckless younger sister is pregnant and her choice is thrown into question. As the story progresses, Ruby discovers that—just like a pregnancy—life doesn't always go according to plan.



TREAT YOUR GUESTS TO DESSERT

If you're looking for a special dessert to accompany your book club discussion, consider baking a cheesecake as a nod to The Cheesecake Factory scene in the book between Gregory and his daughter. Here's a copycat recipe so it tastes just like the popular chain's famous dessert!

THE CHEESECAKE FACTORY COPYCAT CHEESECAKE RECIPE



For the crust:

- 1 ½ cups graham cracker crumbs
- ¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ⅓ cup unsalted butter or margarine, melted

For the filling:

- 4 (8 oz.) packages cream cheese, softened
- 1 ¼ cups sugar
- ½ cup sour cream
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 5 large eggs

For the topping:

- ½ cup sour cream
- 2 teaspoons sugar

Preheat the oven to 475°F. Place a large pan filled with 1/2 inch water in the oven.

To make the crust: Mix graham cracker crumbs and cinnamon; add butter or margarine. Press crust onto bottom and 2/3 of the way up a 9-inch springform pan lined with parchment. Wrap a large piece of foil around the bottom of the pan. Freeze until filling is prepared.

To make the filling: Use an electric mixer to mix cream cheese, sugar, sour cream and vanilla. Blend until smooth and creamy. Scrape down the sides of the bowl. Whisk eggs in a bowl; add to cream cheese mixture. Blend just until eggs are incorporated.

Remove crust from freezer and pour in filling. Carefully place cheesecake into preheated water bath. Bake for 12 minutes; turn oven to 350°F and bake until top of cheesecake turns golden, 50 to 60 minutes. Remove cake to a wire rack to cool.

To make the topping: Combine sour cream and sugar; spread over cake. Cover and refrigerate for at least 4 hours.

PHIL'S FAMOUS BREAD



INGREDIENTS

- 310 grams (1 $\frac{1}{3}$ cups) warm water (between 80° and 85°F)
- Cold water (just enough to dip your fingers in)
- 500 grams (4 cups plus 2 tablespoons) bread flour
- 120 grams ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup) of an active sourdough starter (Can purchase online or use active sourdough recipe. Be sure to feed the starter several hours before starting the loaf!)
- 16 grams (2 teaspoons) fine sea salt
- Large metal or glass mixing bowl
- Colander or shallow bowl
- Kitchen towel or plastic wrap (make sure the towel is clean first!)
- Cast-iron Dutch oven or large, heavy-duty oven-safe pot with a lid
- Sharp knife or bread lame
- Food thermometer

PHIL'S FAMOUS BREAD: INSTRUCTIONS

Step One: In your mixing bowl, whisk together the warm water and your sourdough starter. When mostly combined, add the flour and salt. Mix by hand or with a spatula until the mixture is shaggy. Cover with plastic wrap or damp kitchen towel and let it rest at room temperature for 1 hour.

Step Two: Put several inches of cold water in a bowl. With your uncovered dough still in the bowl, dip your fingers in the water and slide them under the edge of the dough at the top (12 o'clock) all the way down to the bottom of the bowl. Pull that section of dough up and over the center, pressing it into the dough to hold it in place. Rotate the bowl 90° (a quarter turn) and repeat the process three times until you've made 4 folds and turns. Then recover the bowl and rest for another 20 minutes. Repeat the process once more. (Doing this 4 times instead of 2 makes the final loaf chewier.)

Step Three: Once you've completed the stretch and turn process in Step Two at least twice, shape your dough into a ball. Cover and let dough rise 6 to 12 hours in a place that is 68° to 75°F. (Dip your finger in flour and poke the top of the dough—if it mostly springs back, it's ready. If there's no movement or it feels dense, continue to let rise & test every hour until ready. Deflated or soft = over-proofed.)

Step Four: Knead dough until it forms a smooth ball. Line a bowl or colander with a kitchen towel, dust with flour, and set the dough ball in the towel. Cover and let rise at room temperature for 30 minutes. After 30 minutes, place the loaf in the refrigerator for at least an hour while you preheat the oven.

Step Five: Place your cast-iron Dutch oven or oven-safe pot with lid in the oven and preheat the oven at 500°F for 1 hour. When you're ready to bake, remove the loaf from the fridge and dust lightly with flour before placing onto parchment paper. Using a sharp knife, make a shallow cut down the length of the loaf. (Could also do a decorative design!) Remove the pot from the oven and use the parchment paper to place the loaf in the pot. Cover with the lid and bake for 20 minutes.

Step Six: Reduce the oven temperature to 450°F. Carefully remove the lid and continue baking until the internal temperature is 195° to 205°F or the crust is deep golden-brown. (About 20 minutes.) Place the loaf on a wire rack to cool completely before slicing.



PHIL'S FAMOUS SOURDOUGH STARTER



INGREDIENTS

- 60 grams ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup) whole wheat flour (Use 60 grams all-purpose flour for feeding)
- 60 grams ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup) filtered water
- Pint or quart-sized glass container

INSTRUCTIONS

Day 1: In a pint-sized (or larger) glass container, stir together whole wheat flour and water until fully combined with a paste-like consistency. (Add water if it's too dough-like.) Cover the container loosely with a lid and leave it in a 75° to 80°F location for 24 hours.

Day 2: Check the starter for bubbles. If there are no bubbles, let it sit for another 12 to 24 hours or until there are bubbles. If there are bubbles or a greyish liquid on top, proceed with feeding by discarding half the starter, keeping around 60 grams in the container. Add all-purpose flour and water and mix until well-combined. Use a rubber band or piece of tape to mark the level of the mixture. Cover loosely and let it rest for 24 hours.

Day 3: Check the starter to make sure it is bubbly and has doubled in size. If it hasn't, continue to let it sit until it does. If the mixture has doubled in size, discard half and feed again (same amounts of flour and water), then let it sit until it has doubled in size again.

Day 4 and/or 5: Discard half and feed the starter twice more, waiting for the mixture to double in size each time.

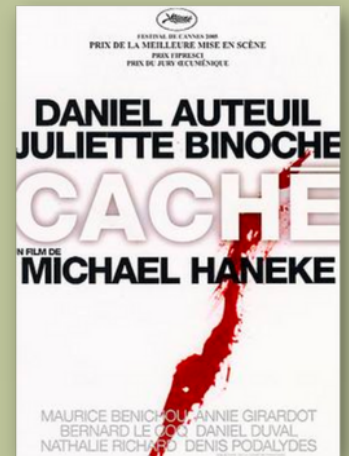
Starter is ready to use after the final feeding and rise. To store your starter, discard and feed once more. Keep the starter in a warm spot until it starts to rise, then cover tightly and put in the refrigerator to keep healthy. (About two hours to rise.) Keep starter healthy by repeating the discarding and feeding process every two weeks.

SANDRA'S FAVORITE THRILLERS



After watching this movie for the first time in college, my friend Paul and I sat in the dark art theater in Hartford unraveling how that final twist worked. We were both backtracking in our brains, making sense of the subtle plot points that got us to the oh-so-satisfying ending of this neo-noir thriller starring the late William Hurt (swoon) and Kathleen Turner (double swoon) as illicit lovers destined for trouble. The film is every bit as good as a great novel with sexy, deeply flawed characters driven by passion that—of course—means murder. Plus, there's this break-the-window sex scene that alone is worth the Amazon rental fee.

I watched this psychological thriller at a time in my life when I was obsessed with treasure hunting and cracking codes. It's a layered, often cryptic French film that gave me plenty to solve. Juliette Binoche plays Anne, a woman whose marriage is impacted by a shit ton of dark secrets, because her husband, Georges (Daniel Auteuil) is hiding something from his past. Something bad. Without my knowing it, I think this film that I watched thirteen years ago helped inspire my plot for *Wednesdays at One*. And it's even better on a second viewing when you can watch more closely for the hidden clue. That's right, singular. Clue.



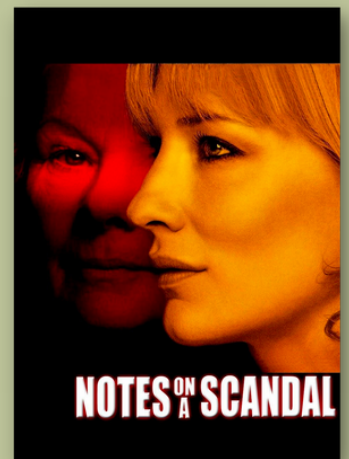
Halfway through this slow-building psychological thriller about a dinner party that turns dark, I asked my husband, “Are these people evil or not?” I honestly didn't know, which is the beauty of this film that keeps you wondering, guessing, and watching closely until the very end. You have your answers, as well as a lot of weirdness to consider.

SANDRA'S FAVORITE THRILLERS



You don't have to like supernatural films to love this spooky thriller that will haunt you long after the credits roll. Okay, I didn't have to encourage my son to watch it with me when he was twelve, but it's one of those movies you want to share with people you love. (We turned it off when it got too weird—and it does get weird.) But the cast is stellar with Bruce Willis at his understated best and young Haley Joel Osment convincing us he sees ghosts. The story is eerie without ever being overdone. And the twists are good enough to make you gasp.

This psychological thriller, based on Zoe Heller's brilliant novel, is about two smart women and the evil that knowing a damaging secret can do. London school teachers, Sherba Hart (Cate Blanchette) and Barbara Covett (Dame Judy Dench) become unlikely friends, a relationship that turns bitter when lonely, jealous Barbara discovers that Sherba is having an affair with an underage student. As Sherba ignores her good sense and succumbs to forbidden sex, I found myself screaming at the screen. "No! Don't do it!" If only she had listened!!



My mother, who grew up in the golden age of Hollywood, loved this campy thriller, in which Bette Davis plays Jane, a former child actress who becomes the caretaker for her disabled sister, Blanche (Joan Crawford). The festering family jealousy is juiced up by the fact that Crawford and Davis had a famous off-screen feud that can be felt in this film. If you've heard of this movie but never watched it, it's time to see what all the fuss was about. It's absolutely delicious.

LET'S DIG INTO OUR PASTS TOGETHER

One of the central themes of *Wednesdays at One* is the past and the necessitation of confronting unresolved issues and memories before they infiltrate the present. To round out your book club discussion, take turns asking each other some of the below questions about each other's pasts. Whether you're old friends or new acquaintances, there's always more to learn about each other! And hopefully there won't be any big revelations or confessions that require therapy...

Who was your first kiss?

Who was your first celebrity crush?

What happened on your worst date?

What was your most embarrassing childhood moment?

What were some of your childhood fears?

How would you describe your childhood home?

What was your first job?

What did you want to be when you "grew up"?

What was the first concert you attended?

What were some of your earliest hobbies? Do you still enjoy those same hobbies?

What's the weirdest thing you believed as a kid?

What year from your past would you most want to re-live? Why?

What's been your proudest moment?

What's the scariest thing you've ever done?

What mistake do you wish you could re-live and change?

What mistake do you think was important for becoming who you are today? Why?





SCAN. SHARE. AND ABOVE ALL, ENJOY!

The QR code is a portal into the world within the book, its origins, and everything in between. All you need to do is scan the code with your phone and you're in!

Some funs things inside:

Discussion guide questions: In-depth and thoughtful questions to get you and your book club started with a great conversation.

An excerpt from the book: Haven't read *Wednesdays at One* yet? We have an editor-picked excerpt from the novel you can read for free. It will make you want to get your own copy that much more.

An interview with Sandra: Sandra talks candidly about her experiences writing *Wednesdays at One*, how she created the characters, and what she hopes her readers will discover through reading the book.

A book trailer: Get excited for *Wednesdays at One* by watching its 30-second cinematic book trailer that proves books deserve just as much glam as films.

A visual tour of the book's setting: Take a deeper look inside where the characters live and work. Does it look like the way you envisioned it?

Phil's Famous Bread Recipe: If you've always wanted to try and make your own bread, this recipe is for you! Learn how to make your own bread starter and share the results of your bread making journey with us @zibbybooks #wednesdaysatone

An essay by Sandra: Sandra discusses how she came to write this book and what the writing process was like in an exclusive personal essay.

A list of Sandra's favorite thrillers: Need some great thriller recommendations? Sandra has the perfect list for you. Check it out and see if you have read or watched any of Sandra's favorites!

A Letter from the Publisher, Zibby Owens: Zibby shares what she loves most about *Wednesdays at One*, what to expect from the story, and why you will love it, too!

There is so much to explore! We made this portal because we are readers who love to know more, writers who are curious about the process, and people who love characters as much we do our trusted friends.