

the
**Margot
Affair**

Book Club Kit

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Hogarth

Reading Group Guide

- 1.** *The Margot Affair* is a novel of intrigue and betrayal that explores many themes, including family, friendship, romance, and trauma. Which theme takes center stage for you and why?
- 2.** How would you characterize Margot's relationship with her father? She specifically recounts a weekend they spent together a few years ago, including a dinner they had together. What is the significance of this trip? How does this weekend inform Margot's perception of their relationship?
- 3.** What role does Margot's friendship with Juliette play in Margot's life? In what ways are their lives similar and in what ways are they different?
- 4.** After meeting David Perrin, a journalist, at the afterparty of a play, Margot begins writing to him. What do you think motivates her desire to write to him?
- 5.** Margot's father's death is sudden and unexpected. How does this impact the people in his life? Who do you think is most impacted by this tragedy?
- 6.** How does Margot's understanding of Madame Lapierre change throughout the novel? What moment marks this transition?
- 7.** How does Margot and Brigitte's relationship develop beyond that of a journalist and subject? What does Margot seek in her friendship with Brigitte? What does Brigitte seek in Margot?
- 8.** What are your thoughts about Margot's affair with David? In what ways does this brief yet intimate and intense relationship influence Margot?
- 9.** The fragile and potent power of secrets is a returning theme throughout the book. Having been in the shadow of her parents' secret her whole life, how has this shaped the way in which Margot understands boundaries and relationships?
- 10.** Romance is an essential aspect of one's coming of age. How do romantic relationships and sexual discovery play a role in Margot's growth and transition throughout the novel?
- 11.** Put yourself in Margot's shoes: What would you have done with the secret of your family? Why?
- 12.** Female relationships play a crucial role within this book, especially in Margot's life. What are the various female relationships she has? Compare and contrast these relationships and the impact of them on her life.
- 13.** What are some ways in which Margot is influenced by her mother? Does she aspire to be like her mother or is she motivated to differentiate herself from her mother?

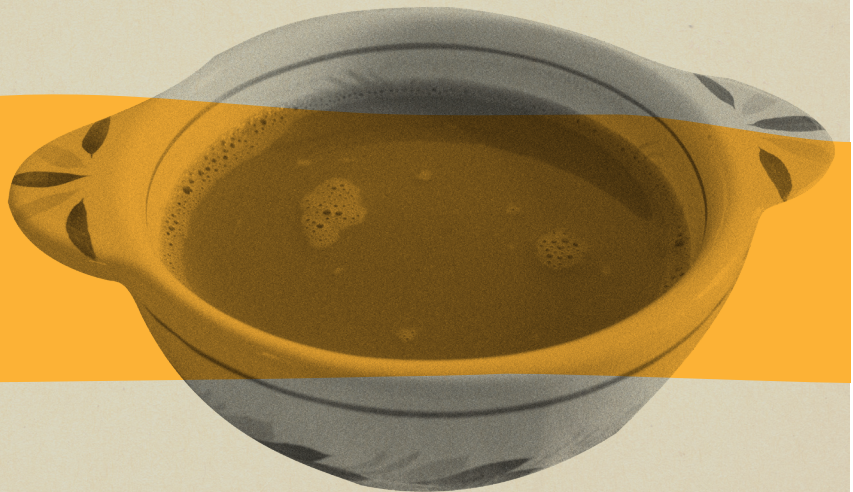
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- 14.** Towards the end of the book Margot receives her birth certificate in which she sees that her father gave her his last name, Lapierre—how does this make Margot feel? In what ways does this change her perception of her identity? Do you think she chooses to take his name (Lapierre), to keep her mother's (Louve), or to adopt both?
- 15.** Margot and her mother have a tense and at times violent relationship. Would you consider this a factor in why Margot decides to share the story of her family with the world without telling her mother?
- 16.** The revelation of her parents' affair not only results in Margot's life shifting from private to public, it also frees Margot from a burden she no longer has to carry. Do you think Margot really feels liberated by the end of the novel? Why or why not?
- 17.** Anouk is a successful stage actress but in her personal life she has remained invisible as the "other" woman. How do you feel about Anouk's performance at the end of the novel? Did you expect it? Does it change the way you view the rest of the story?
- 18.** What are the different spaces we encounter in the novel, both private and public? How is Margot shaped by those spaces?
- 19.** The characters of this novel often tell each other stories, such as Brigitte's story about the chef and her daughter, Anouk's story about being pregnant with Margot and the disappearing girl at the wedding, David's story about Brigitte's roommate, Anaïs, and so on. What is the role of storytelling as a form of communication in the novel? How do these stories advance relationships, and what does Margot learn from each story she's told?
- 20.** Film is another recurring theme in the book, from Margot watching films with her father to Brigitte's obsession with *Trouble Every Day* to Juliette's own attempt at filmmaking. What do you think the author is trying to explore with this theme? What did you make of the stark similarities between *Trouble Every Day* and Juliette's film?





Recipes



Brigitte's Clafoutis

Caramelized Pear Clafoutis

- 2 tablespoons salted butter, plus more for the pan
- 2 pears, peeled and cut into 1-inch slices
- ¼ cup sugar, plus 2 tablespoons
- ½ cup whole milk
- ½ cup heavy cream
- 3 eggs
- ½ cup (65g) all-purpose flour
- Pinch of salt
- ¼ cup toasted almond slices
- Confectioners' sugar, for serving

“The clafoutis sat on the table, the plate hot from the oven. Caramelized slices of pear hid beneath the custard, and the top was sprinkled with shards of toasted almonds. She scooped a portion into a bowl and placed it in front of me. Steam clouded the underside of my spoon. She started speaking almost immediately, as if we had known each other for years.”

Heat oven to 375°F with rack in center. Generously butter an 8-inch square (or 9-inch round) baking pan.

Melt 2 tablespoons butter in a medium nonstick skillet over medium heat. Add pears, sprinkle with 2 tablespoons sugar, and stir to coat in sugar. Cook pears until starting to soften and turn golden, 6 to 8 minutes. Remove skillet from heat and let cool while you prepare the batter.

In a blender, combine remaining ¼ cup sugar, the milk, cream, eggs, flour, and salt. Blend until combined and frothy, about 1 minute.

Evenly distribute pear slices on the bottom of the prepared pan. Drizzle melted butter and sugar on top. Gently pour batter over pears. Bake clafoutis until puffed and golden brown, about 35 minutes. Allow to cool for a few minutes.

Just before serving, top with toasted almond slices and dust with confectioners' sugar. Spoon into bowls while still warm or enjoy at room temperature.

Anouk's Hot Chocolate

Hot Chocolate with Buttered Toast

- 1¼ cups whole milk
- Dash of heavy cream (about 2 teaspoons)
- ¼ cup (35g/1.25 oz) finely chopped bittersweet chocolate
- Piece of baguette, cut in half
- Salted butter, for bread

“In this heat I would have preferred a bowl of cold cereal, but this was the sole indulgence she liked to offer me on the day of my birth. She made it with whole milk and a dash of cream, and pieces of dark chocolate. She set it on the table in front of me. One year wiser, she said. She watched me eat. I dipped a piece of buttered toast into the chocolate. Pools of salty grease collected on its surface.”

Place milk and cream in a small pot over medium heat. Bring to a simmer and remove from heat. Add chocolate and whisk or stir with a wooden spoon until melted.

Toast baguette and thickly slather with salted butter. (Better if it's cultured butter with visible salt crystals.) Pour hot chocolate into a small bowl or cup. Dip toasted bread in hot chocolate and eat, taking breaks to sip from the bowl. The butter will melt into the chocolate, gently flavoring its rich sweetness with salt.

Mathilde's Green Salad

Lettuce with Vinaigrette

- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 1 teaspoon mayonnaise
- 1 tablespoon red wine vinegar
- Coarse salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 head of lettuce, washed and dried
- A few sprigs of fresh dill, leaves picked

“Mathilde asked me to taste the vinaigrette and see if it needed more salt or oil, but of course it was perfect; I could’ve sipped it from the cup. The secret ingredient was a teaspoon of mayonnaise.”

In a small bowl, whisk together mustard, mayonnaise, and vinegar. Season with salt and pepper. Add olive oil, whisking, until emulsified.

Tear lettuce leaves in halves or thirds into a large salad bowl. Add dill, season lightly with salt and pepper, and toss to combine.

Add as much vinaigrette as you like to the salad and toss to combine. Store any remaining vinaigrette in an airtight container in the refrigerator for tomorrow’s salad, or for sopping up with bread.

