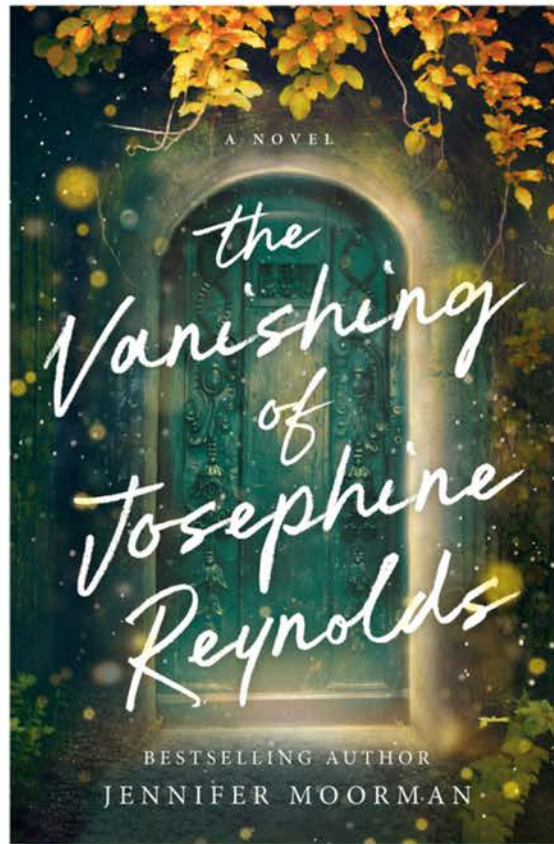


READING GROUP GUIDE

A NOVEL

*the
Vanishing
of
Josephine
Reynolds*

BESTSELLING AUTHOR
JENNIFER MOORMAN



This reading group guide for *The Vanishing of Josephine Reynolds* includes an introduction, discussion questions, ideas for enhancing your book club, and bonus material to elevate your experience. The suggested questions are intended to help you find interesting topics and new perspectives for your discussion. We hope that this guide will add more magic to your conversation and increase your enjoyment of the book.

In this magical realism novel, two parallel timelines start blending together—present-day and 1927—and Josephine witnesses her present life disappearing right before her eyes. She can only hope it's not too late to save her own future.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1.** At the beginning of the story, Josephine starts out in one state of mind—stuck in a dark place—but throughout the story, she begins to truly see herself and a future. How does Josephine’s character evolve throughout the story, and what significant events contribute to her growth?
- 2.** Families dynamics play a significant role in this story. Discuss the relationship between Josephine and her sister. How does their bond influence Josephine’s decisions and actions? How does Josephine’s bond with Alma change the course of her life?
- 3.** What did you learn about the Jazz Age and its cultural significance? What details made this era come alive for you?
- 4.** Time travel in fiction happens in myriad ways. How does the concept of time travel in the book enhance the storyline? What did you enjoy about the time travel element within the context of the story?
- 5.** There are so many ways the past affects the present and the future. When time travel becomes a piece of this story, the past and present entangle and complications can arise. What are the implications of Josephine altering the past? How does this theme of cause and effect resonate with you?
- 6.** How does meeting Alma change Josephine’s understanding of her family history and herself? Discuss the importance of ancestry and legacy in the book.
- 7.** Josephine faces difficult choices in her quest to save Alma and herself. What ethical considerations does she grapple with, and how do these shape her actions?

8. Themes of grief and healing arise in the book. How does Josephine's journey through time help her cope with her grief and loss? How do her encounters with people in 1927 affect her growth and healing? In what ways is the house a metaphor for her healing process?

9. Courage and resilience are common threads woven throughout Josephine and Alma's lives. Discuss Alma's character and the risks she takes running a speakeasy. How do her courage and resilience inspire Josephine?

10. How are love and relationships depicted in the book, both in the past and present timelines? How do these relationships influence the characters' motivations? Which relationships was your favorite?

11. Historical fiction often takes creative license when recreating a story. How does this story balance historical accuracy with fictional elements? How was the blending of these aspects effective?

12. How does the alternating timeline between the present and 1927 impact your reading experience? How did it enhance the suspense and engagement?

13. What does the original door symbolize in the story? How does it function as a portal between past and present, and what does it represent for Josephine?

14. How does the book explore the theme of choices and their consequences? Do you agree with the decisions Josephine makes throughout her journey? Why or why not? What might have you done differently?

15. If you could invite characters from this novel out for dinner, which characters would join you at the table? Why did you choose them?

ELEVATE YOUR EXPERIENCE

1. The Power of Choice and Consequence — Josephine’s decisions ripple through time, affecting both her life and Alma’s. Discuss how the novel portrays the entwining of choices and their consequences. How do the characters’ actions mirror decisions you’ve faced in your own life? What lessons about accountability and impact can be drawn?

2. Living Through Loss and Finding Purpose — Josephine begins her journey feeling lost and disconnected after her husband’s death. Explore how grief shapes her character and motivates her actions. How do you see her journey toward healing reflected in your own or others’ experiences with loss? What role does purpose play in navigating difficult times?

3. Breaking Barriers Across Generations — Alma’s boldness as a speakeasy owner during the 1920s defied societal norms, while Josephine’s contemporary struggles highlight the weight of modern expectations. Discuss the similarities and differences in how both women navigate societal pressures. How have generational changes shaped the challenges women face today?

4. The Allure of the Past and the Anchor of the Present — The novel captures the magic of the Jazz Age, yet it also reminds readers of the dangers of romanticizing the past. How does the book balance nostalgia with reality? Have you ever found yourself yearning for the past, and how did it affect your view of the present? How can we learn from history while remaining grounded in the present?

DIVINITY CANDY



A Southern favorite, Divinity Candy was created in the US in the early 20th century. Similar to Turkish Delight and other nougat / meringue-type candies, divinity is made by cooking sugar syrup until firm then beating whisked egg whites into it. Many believe that the name of this Southern confection is derived from how it tastes: divine!

Yield: 60 pieces

Ingredients

2 large egg whites
3 cups sugar
2/3 cup water
1/2 cup light corn syrup
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 cup chopped pecans

Directions

1. Place egg whites in the bowl of a stand mixer, and let stand at room temperature for 30 minutes.
2. Meanwhile, line three 15x10x1-in. pans with waxed paper.
3. In a large heavy saucepan, combine the sugar, water, and corn syrup. Bring to a boil, stirring constantly to dissolve sugar. Then cook, without stirring, over medium heat until a candy thermometer reads 252°F (hard-ball stage).
4. Just before the temperature is reached, beat egg whites in the stand mixer bowl on medium speed until stiff peaks form.
5. Slowly add hot sugar mixture in a thin stream over egg whites, beating constantly and scraping sides of bowl occasionally.
6. Add vanilla. Beat until candy holds its shape, 5–6 minutes. (Do not overmix or candy will get stiff and crumbly.) Immediately fold in pecans.
7. Quickly drop by heaping teaspoonfuls onto prepared pans. Let stand at room temperature until dry to the touch.
8. Store between sheets of waxed paper in an airtight container at room temperature.

THE VANISHING OF JOSEPHINE REYNOLDS PLAYLIST

“He Hadn’t Up Till Yesterday” – Sophie Tucker

“What I Wouldn’t Do for That Man” – Annette Hanshaw

“Is There Anything Wrong in That?” – Helen Kane

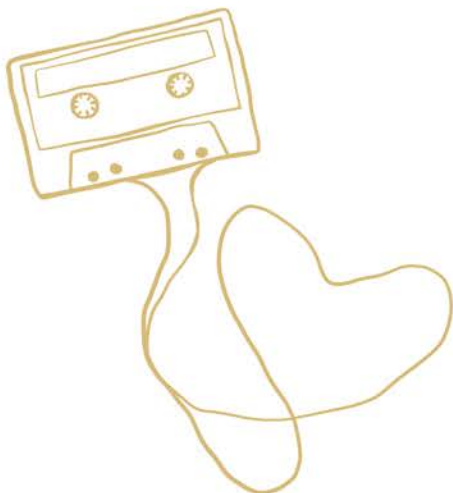
“Nobody Knows You” – Bessie Smith

“Don’t Take Away Those Blues” – Flo Bert

“Blue for Tommy” – Sidney Bechet

“Running Wild” – Duke Ellington

And More!



A conversation with
Jennifer Moorman



Q: Was the title of your book, *The Vanishing of Josephine Reynolds*, always the title?

A: No. I originally titled it “Among the Whispering and the Stars.” You can guess why! But to someone who hasn’t read the book, the title is a bit vague, and it doesn’t offer a peek into what the book is really about. Harper Muse and I tossed around a few ideas, and we loved the mysterious aspect of including *vanishing* in the title and also using Josephine’s name. It causes you to ask questions. Who is Josephine? Why is she vanishing?

Q: Who's the main character of your book—and was that always their name?

A: Josephine is the main character and this was always her name. I knew it from the very beginning, from the very first line.

Q: At the start of the book, what's the character's goal?

A: Josephine wants to disappear. Not the “best” goal to have, but she's tired, sad, and over life. She's forgotten what makes her happy, what lights her up, and so the easiest option is just to stop.

Q: What was the core idea for this novel—a plot point? a theme?—and where did it come from?

A: I never start novels with a specific theme in mind. The theme, if there is one, evolves organically during the storytelling. If I were to pick out one theme in the novel, it would be remembering who you are, remembering why you are special and why your life is so meaningful. It's also a reminder how important your life is to the lives of others. You often don't realize how unique and essential you are. This story is a way for you to remember.

Q: At what point did you come up with the final version of the first line? What is it?

A: It came to me immediately! Which never happens. Not that I remember at least. I loved it, and I wanted to keep it, and I hoped that my editor loved it and wanted to keep it too, ha! But...she wanted to add a prologue, so here are the first lines of chapter 1.

First two lines: Josephine Reynolds was a ghost. She moved through life like an untethered being, a shadow on the periphery.

Q: Did you know the ending of the book when you started?

A: No! It came to me as I wrote. I had a vague idea, but I didn't actually know how the story would unfold when I got to the last few chapters.

Q: What's something in this book that you've never done before?

A: I've never been to a real speakeasy! I'd love to dress up and go to one, drink something fancy, raise a glass to Alma!

Q: How do you want readers to feel when they close the book?

A: I hope readers feel uplifted, hopeful, and surrounded by the belief that they are important and special and unique and essential to the lives of their families, friends, and the whole world. Each one of us plays a beautiful role in the story of life, and I want people to *know* how glorious that truth is.

Q: What did you learn from this book? About writing, or life, or the writing life?

A: I learned how to write a time travel novel and not get tangled up in the "how is this possible?" aspect too much. I love that readers are willing to extend their disbelief and trust in the possibilities of the extraordinary all around us. I also learned that an enchanted door is fascinating to a lot of people other than me. So many of us are brave enough to step through that door and see what's on the other side.

Hire movers.

Hire painters.

Replace front door.

Find source of music.



call
Katherine

Tuesday, January 14, 2025

Top-Shelf Liquor

- 2 cases of Kentucky Bourbon
- 3 bottles of London Dry Gin
- 1 case of Caribbean Dark Rum
- 2 bottles of French Cognac
- 4 bottles of Absinthe
- 1 case of Irish Whiskey



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