



The Secret Life of Book Club

Heather Woodhaven

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Book Club Just Got Real.

Jeanine Phelps is tired of reading about other women who grab life and have epiphanies. She challenges her book club to live like the heroines in the books they love.

At first, seizing the day is pure fun until it generates an upset in each of their lives:

Jeanine's husband is so inspired by her new vitality it triggers a bizarre mid-life crisis involving tacos.

Paula, the model PTA soccer mom, starts fighting with her man about the family printing business until she's drawn back to her secret passion.

Kate, a single mom and teacher, can't figure out if the rekindled friendship with the new museum creator is worth the romantic risk.

Anne, a mother of four babies, works to hold the book club together while trying to figure out her own identity.

When everyone wants to quit the challenge, the media's spotlight makes it impossible. Can they rely on each other while keeping their priorities? And more importantly, is their sanity worth the chance to each become a heroine in her own life?

The Secret Life of Book Club Details

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From Reader Review The Secret Life of Book Club for online ebook

Cathy Daniel says

What an amazing book! This book revolves around 4 friends in a bookclub who decide to live out adventures, instead of just reading about them. They have an A-Z challenge. Sometimes in books you favor one character over the other. Not so with this one! I equally enjoyed and loved each lady and their lives. I was totally caught up in and hung on every word I read. I found the relationships from friendship to work to spouses very realistic and spot on. I also loved there was romance for the single mom. It was well done and utterly cute! Read this book and I guarantee you'll love the ladies! A new favorite!

Stacey says

This is a book about life. Yes, I generally avoid those books too. :) I figure I read to escape my life not embrace it! Yet, when I started reading this book I knew right away I was holding something special.

These are not characters you can ignore on the pages of a book, because they are people you know. Your best friend, your sister, your neighbor, or the PTO mom that you prefer to avoid when you see her at the grocery store. When you read this book, you will relate to the stories and the struggles will become real, because they are things you deal with in everyday life. The difference is Heather's amazing sense of humor. I love love love her humor. I'll be honest not everyone can write humor. I can't. It takes a real talent to make the flu funny or working in a food truck, wait.. that last one could be funny. Just wait and see....

The one and ONLY downside to this book was the sheer number of characters. It took me a few chapters before I could keep them all straight in my head, but I'm so glad I stayed with it. I loved each of these women and when I finished reading the book I felt like I was leaving behind a friend.

I hope Heather has plans to write a follow-up, because I think readers are going to demand it.

Melissa says

Really good. Hard to put down!

Madeline {Plan to Happy} says

The Secret Life of Book Club by Heather Woodhaven is the perfect book for any Mom who feels like she is in a rut and wonders what would happen if she could get herself pushed out (way out) of that rut. In this novel, a group of women morphs their book club into an A - Z challenge. They pick something new to try for each letter of the alphabet and hilarity ensues.

There were portions of this book that hit, well, a little too close to home. When you are a Mom and your life is so intertwined with that of your children that you begin to lose sight of who you are, it can be terrifying.

Now, I handle this differently than the characters in this book do, but that doesn't make either choice a wrong one.

In addition to hitting close to home, *The Secret Life of Book Club* had a few portions that had me laughing out loud. Now how often does that happen while reading? At other times, the characters seemed a little over-dramatic, but that is coming from a pragmatist, so take it with a grain of salt!

If your life seems like a chain of "work, kids, not enough sleep, work, kids, not enough sleep, work, kids, not enough sleep," with no end in sight, you will really get a kick out of how far these women go to get a jump start and feel truly alive again. The characters seem like people you could really know in your own life, but with just enough extra to make them jump off the page. Pick up a copy!

{Find this review, and more, on my blog, Plan to Happy (www.plantohappy.com). I was sent a complimentary Advanced Reading Copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.}

Katie W says

(4.5 Stars) I belong to a book club and we're all so different. It was fun to read about these four women and what makes them unique. What really hit me is that each and every person has challenges and we all need that out to help us cope with them.

The story follows Jeanine, a dental assistant who struggles with her husband's mid-life crisis. Her life is in a rut and they're just in survival mode, but breaking out of that mold disrupts her organized life and throws her for a loop. We meet Paula, a woman with a big secret. She just wants to feel appreciated and secure. Kate is a teacher and single mom of two, who just can't get over her college crush. And Anne, a mom to four kids under four. She seems to be the most secure in her marriage and strives to find peace with things that happen in her life. I tried to find a character to identify with and it was tough because they each have a little piece of me.

I really liked this idea. Instead of just reading and living life vicariously through fictional characters, these women decide to take a challenge to help them experience new things. They each take turns choosing something that goes with each letter of the alphabet--for example, "G" for glow-in-the-dark golf, which was my favorite because I laughed so hard what happened. This challenge really stretched them and forced them to re-evaluate their lives and to rediscover themselves. I laughed, I cried, and felt everything in between. Not only is the story entertaining, but I found myself thinking about my life and the changes I can make to make life better. It really is easy to get stuck in doing the same old thing day in and day out, year after year. I really enjoyed it all!

Content: mild language; mild religious elements (a verse of scripture helps a character and it mentions them attending church); mild romance; no violence. Clean!

I received a copy in exchange for an honest review

Teresa says

This story is about thinking outside the box!

Jeanine, Anne, Paula and Kate, all neighbors, have formed a cozy little book club. It gets them out of their "taking care of kids" and "taking care of their home" rut one night a week. As Jeanine's turn to pick the next book approaches, she decides, after a little internet surfing, to approach the other ladies with a crazy idea an A to Z Challenge!

After a little resistance, they all agree it sounds like a fun and interesting idea. Each month they will pick an adventure and everyone will participate. Month One needs to start with the letter A. This group of ladies gets involved with belly dancing, elephants painting and glow in the dark golfing ... as well as solving a murder at a dinner party and getting caught skinny dipping in a private hot tub!

The challenge that starts as a fun idea begins to create discord. As they continue with their challenges, they begin to learn things about themselves either unknown or long buried and forgotten. Things they enjoyed when they were younger, things they hate to do but continue doing because it is expected, changes they want to make in their lives and the lives of their families. As their husbands see the changes in each of their wives, they begin to pursue dreams they have set aside also.

This book navigates the changes at each stage of life. It looks at relationships between husbands and wives and the ups and downs they experience and the ability to grow together.

It is a fun group of characters that we watch grow and change and become better versions of themselves.

Linda Dobinson says

Jeanine Phelps and her book club friends decide to live the life of heroines instead of just reading about them by doing an A - Z challenge of new experiences. So far so good. I had high hopes for this book because in recent years I have read two books where the action was based around completing a list of challenges - The Single Girls To Do List by Lindsey Kelk, and The Seven Steps To Closure by Donna Joy Usher, both of which I love to bits because I liked the heroine and there were genuine laugh-out-loud moments.

Unfortunately not this time.

What I did not like about this book. Of the four women three were married and the other one divorced, all had children. Why did all four have to have children. Children give a different perspective, and as I have no children I don't share that perspective. I felt it would have made it more interesting if one at least was child free.

How old were these women? Who knows we are not told. As Anne's youngest children are six months, I would hazard a guess at twenties, and as Jeanine's husband is in his forties I guess she may be the same, the other two - in between? Which leads me to "ladies". The narrator refers to them as "ladies" and Anne does as well saying how "these ladies" improved her life. Why LADIES ? It makes them seem so formal, so frumpy. What happened to GIRLS? - as in "seeing the girls" or "girls night out". Much more friendly and fun.

What I liked about this book. The challenges were quite fun, maybe more time should have been spent on them. And the deepening friendships were emotional.

All in all, this book was ok, not outstanding.

Lisa Hess says

I think Woodhaven has an exceptional knack for capturing the joys and pains of being a 30-something wife and mother in middle-class America today. Many women in that place will relate strongly to these characters. Like ensemble women's fiction? This is the book for you -- perfect for a summer read, and better yet, for a summer book club...

Melanie says

As a reader, I enjoy reading books that have book clubs in them. Whether that's the focus or a side story, I love them! In this story, the book club is the reason these women know each other.

Jeanine, Paula, Kate and Anne live in the same neighborhood and all have such different lives. They meet together to discuss books. After two years in their book club, Jeanine feels like they're acquaintances rather than friends. She brings up a challenge for the group to undertake which will require that they try new things. Little does she realize what massive changes this will bring for all of them.

Jeanine is a dental hygienist who feels like her life has become predictable and boring. When she shakes things up, her husband has a mid-life crisis which causes a lot of tension between them as he seems determined to live a dream he's apparently had for a long time but never shared with her. Paula works part-time with her husband and volunteers the rest of the time. She has a secret passion which almost destroys her marriage. Kate is a single mom and second grade teacher. She is reunited with someone from her past. She's confused as he doesn't appear to be what she thought and they both need to decide if a relationship is what they're looking for. Anne is a stay at home mom with four children under the age of four and is dealing with a major decision her husband made without discussing it with her first.

Through their experiences with their challenge, these women become friends and are there for each other as they're going through their individual struggles. I enjoyed getting to know each of them. This book deals with their relationships with each other and with the men in their lives. They were imperfect and had their ups and downs. Some were quite funny! I'm not personally looking to challenge myself the way these women did, but it was fun to read about their experiences!

I received a copy of this book to review. My opinion is 100% my own.

Mel's Shelves

Heather Gilbert says

Oh my goodness! I soaked this book up. I felt like the four main characters in the book club were friends. I loved the realism with the marriage/children dynamics. And the adventures had me LOL-ing so often! Three words: fake cop car. That scenario was so vivid! I hope against hope Heather has another book coming out soon along these lines, because this one was excellent. A new fave.

Christina says

If an author is unknown to me, I read the sample of the beginning of the book – not really to see if I will like the storyline, but mainly to see if I enjoy the writing style. Sadly, nearly all of them fall flat. Most of the time there is too much telling and not enough doing. This is the first sample that actually led me to purchase the entire book. As soon as I read the bit about Kate and the Christmas card, I knew I had to keep reading.

What did I enjoy about the book? The characters felt real – I could imagine myself having neighbors like these. The situations they found themselves in were things that could happen in everyday life. Jeanine, Paula, Anne and Kate were far from perfect – and I found that absolutely refreshing. There were funny moments and endearing moments, and at the end I found myself tearing up a bit. When I stopped to question myself as to why that was happening, I decided it was just because these ladies WERE, and I got to know them, and I was grateful.

So, what bothered me about the book? Just when I would get really invested in a character's story, the point of view would change to another character and leave me hanging. The suspense was killing me!

Thank you, Heather, for a great story. Reading it preempted writing my own last night, and that rarely happens.

Kristine McCord says

I have to admit, I loved the premise of this story right away. I mean: Moms. Books. Messy relationships. Lots of fun adventure. Count me in. Even better, the story did not disappoint. In fact, it made me laugh, cry, and then laugh some more. I recommend this particularly for book clubs...because it offers even more than a lively discussion--it's an inspiring challenge that can actually be emulated. You can't go wrong with this one. I truly enjoyed it.

Angela Strong says

I am a raving fan. Seriously. These characters captured me to the point that it's almost embarrassing to admit, but I will admit it here anyway...

I had to force myself to put the book down to go teach my yoga class, and at the end of yoga I usually have everyone close their eyes as I guide them through a relaxation exercise. Not this day. I had them close their eyes and "listen to the music" so I could think about the book some more.

It was the best book I read last year, and there are a couple scenes I told everyone about. Even my dad, who doesn't read women's fiction.

I laughed. I cried. (I had to take out my contacts because I cried so much they got blurry.) But it is definitely a feel-good book.

So there you have it. My embarrassing rave review. And just so you know, I don't rave very often. I actually

don't even finish most books I pick up. But this one is that good.

Alicia says

This is my favorite kind of book. A story with drama but not ruled by it. Laugh-out-loud funny. Wholesome but not goody-goody. These characters faced some real challenges in their work, marriages, and friendships, but they persevered.

Celia says

The book is entertaining and I did enjoy the challenge, although not exactly reading related. One of the questions in the Book Club Questions was "Which character do you relate to the most?". I have no children and am in a very stable, communicative marriage. It was hard for me to relate to any of these ladies. Therefore, 3 stars instead of more.
