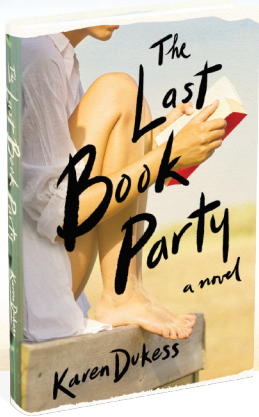


The Last Book Party

a novel by Karen Dukess

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR READING GROUPS

1. *The Last Book Party* is the title of the book, but it is only a small part of the book. Did you expect this? Why do you think the book party is so important to Eve and the other characters? What does it represent?
2. On page 16 Alva tells Eve to read *I Capture the Castle* even though Eve says she has already read it. Why do you think she chose that book? What was she trying to communicate to Eve? How does *I Capture the Castle* parallel *The Last Book Party*? (If you haven't read *I Capture the Castle*, you can look up a quick summary, or your group could read both books and consider both narrators.)
3. Place is a large part of this book. Eve has a strong attachment to the Cape and has memorized most of the environment. Why do you think this environment is so soothing for Eve? What do you notice differently about the way she thinks about Florida versus the Cape?
4. Eve seems a bit naïve to the relationships and identities of many characters, but on page 43 she very clearly defines the difference between the editorial and publicity roles at the publishing house. Why do you think she can see these roles and personalities in work so clearly, but she has a harder time with people outside of work?
5. Eve is treated without as much respect or understanding because she is female. Even her boss hires a young blond male to replace Ron, the editorial assistant, rather than promoting Eve to fill that position. Her parents accept her publishing interests as a holding pattern while she finds a husband. At the end of the book when Franny calls Eve a “hiccup” and Henry looks at her as if she could be anyone, Eve realizes she really could have been anyone. Do you think the way she is treated as a female by these characters is specific to 1987 or do you think these issues are still present today?
6. Eve seems aware of her limitations and people's perceptions about women but she does not verbally advocate for herself or women. Why do you think this is?
7. What other differences and similarities do you see between 1987 in the novel and today in terms of gender, career, relationships, and social values?
8. Eve's relationship with Danny seems to be another example of her feeling less important and less seen. Do you think this has as much to do with his excelling in his mathematics career as it does with their gender? Do you think their parents would have handled his depression



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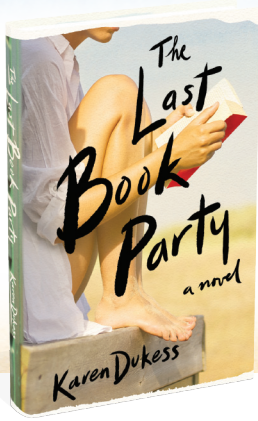
differently if it had been Eve instead of Danny?

9. The other book Alva gives Eve is *Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House*. How does this book inform the current story with Henry and Eve? Why do you think Alva recommends this other than to show a parallel house-building experience?
10. Eve is suspicious of Jeremy from the beginning of the book until after the party. She even disregards his advice about taking the job with Henry. Why do you think she is so suspicious immediately of Jeremy when she is otherwise so non-judgmental of other characters?
11. Jeremy challenges Eve's idea of being a writer and how to write. He sees it as hard work and

not just dependent on the few moments when a story simply comes to you. He doesn't believe it's a gift the way that Eve and her mom describe it. Why do you think Eve created this idea of being a writer? Why does she seem surprised by Jeremy's feelings on the topic?

12. In some ways Eve seems much younger than 25 years old. How do you think Alva and Malcolm and her parents are trying to help or hinder her growth?
13. The book is structured by month until after the party. Why do you think the author chose to set Part V one year later? What was your reaction to that shift?





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THROW YOUR OWN BOOK PARTY!

Incorporate snacks, a meal, or a cocktail into your book club event with these ideas from Karen Dukess.

Cocktail party, in the style of Henry and Tillie

Wellfleet oysters on the half shell

Deviled eggs

Mixed nuts

Gin and Tonic

Cocktail party, in the style of the Rosens

Shrimp cocktail

Smoked bluefish and cream cheese on crackers

Assortment of mini quiches

Cheese (Brie or Camembert preferred) and crackers

White wine spritzers

Scotch on the rocks

Cape Cod Clambake

Steamed Shellfish (steamers, littleneck clams or mussels)

Maine Lobster served with drawn butter

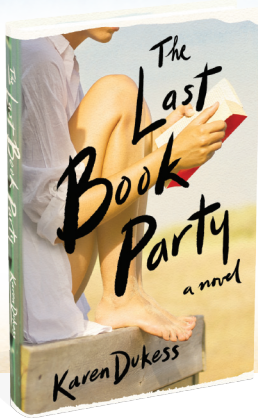
Corn on the Cob

Potato salad

Brownies and Blondies

Corona Beer

Seabreeze Cocktails (cranberry juice and vodka)



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1980s Summer Dinner Party

Spinach dip and crudites

Warm goat cheese salad

Chicken Marbella (from Silver Palate Cookbook)

Rice Pilaf

Peach Raspberry Cobbler with Vanilla Ice Cream

White Wine

A Playlist for Your Reading Experience

Walk Like An Egyptian —THE BANGLES

Once in a Lifetime —TALKING HEADS

Coyote —JONI MITCHELL

Sweet Dreams (Are Made of This) —EURYTHMICS

La Bamba, —LOS LOBOS

I Wanna Dance with Somebody (Who Loves Me) —WHITNEY HOUSTON

Smooth Operator —SADE

One Way or Another —BLONDIE

Shattered —THE ROLLING STONES

Alison —ELVIS COSTELLO

Angel from Montgomery, —BONNIE RAITT

Don't Stand So Close to Me —THE POLICE

True Colors —CYNDI LAUPER

Touch of Grey —GRATEFUL DEAD

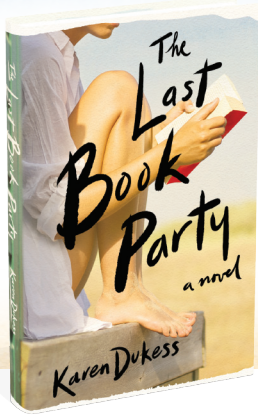
Rock Lobster, —B-52s

Blue Bayou, —LINDA RONSTADT

Let's Dance, —DAVID BOWIE

Chain of Fools, —ARETHA FRANKLIN

Tom's Diner, —SUZANNE VEGA

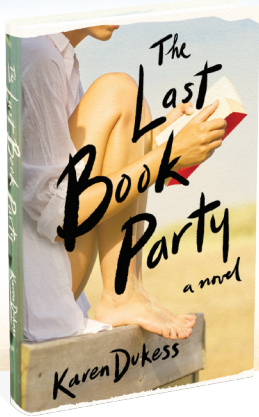


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The Last Book Party Reading List: Read Along with Eve

1. *The Thorn Birds* by Colleen McCullough
2. *My Ántonia* by Willa Cather
3. *I Capture the Castle* by Dodie Smith
4. *Love in Bloomsbury: A Memoir* by Frances Partridge
5. *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Bronte
6. *Winesburg, Ohio* by Sherwood Anderson
7. *A Wreath for the Enemy* by Pamela Frankau
8. *Cape Cod* by Henry Thoreau
9. *World's Fair* by E.L. Doctorow
10. *Stones for Ibarra* by Harriet Doerr
11. *Moby Dick* by Herman Melville
12. *The Moonstone* by Wilkie Collins
13. *Rich Man, Poor Man* by Irwin Shaw
14. *Anna Karenina* by Leo Tolstoy
15. *Scruples* by Judith Krantz
16. *Harold and the Purple Crayon* by Crockett Johnson
17. *Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House* by Eric Hodgins
18. *Anna and the King of Siam* by Margaret Landon
19. *Caddie Woodlawn* by Carol Ryrie Brink
20. *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen
21. *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë
22. *Marjorie Morningstar* by Herman Wouk
23. *Exodus* by Leon Uris
24. *The Secret of the Old Clock* by Carolyn Keene
25. *Rebecca* by Daphne du Maurier
26. *The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett
27. *Sweet Savage Love* by Rosemary Rogers
28. *A Little Princess* by Frances Hodgson Burnett
29. *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe
30. *Middlemarch* by George Eliot
31. *Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison



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32. *Scoop* by Evelyn Waugh
33. *Amelia Bedelia* by Peggy Parish
34. *Zuleika Dobson* by Max Beerbohm
35. *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* by Anita Loos
36. *Housekeeping* by Marilynne Robinson
37. *Thy Neighbor's Wife* by Gay Talese
38. *Take Forty Eggs: A Comprehensive Guide to Cookery and Household Management* by Basil Collier and Helen Kapp
39. *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison
40. *Lake Wobegon Days* by Garrison Keillor
41. *Pippi Longstocking* by Astrid Lindgren
42. *The Woman in White* by Wilkie Collins
43. *Winnie the Pooh* by A.A. Milne
44. *Goodbye, Columbus* by Philip Roth
45. *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne
46. *Bright Lights, Big City* by Jay McInerney
47. *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald
48. *Breakfast at Tiffany's* by Truman Capote
49. *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston
50. *Cross Creek Cookery* by Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings
51. *Tourist Season* by Carl Hiassen
52. *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* by Richard Bach

