

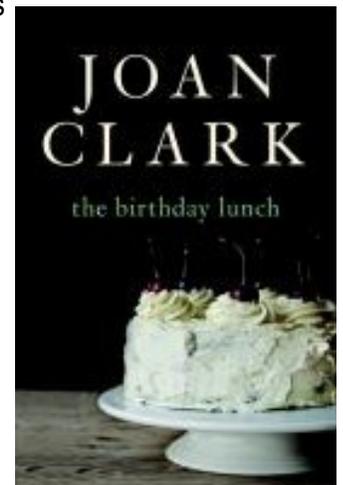


The Birthday Lunch

Joan Clark

Discussion Questions

1. How did you experience the book? Were you engaged immediately, or did it take you a while to "get into it"? How did you feel reading it—amused, sad, disturbed, confused, bored...?
2. Describe the main characters—personality traits, motivations, and inner qualities. Why do characters do what they do? Are their actions justified? Describe the dynamics between characters (in a marriage, family, or friendship). How has the past shaped their lives?
3. Are the main characters dynamic—changing or maturing by the end of the book? Do they learn about themselves, how the world works and their role in it?
4. Discuss the plot. Is it engaging—do you find the story interesting? Is this a plot-driven book—a fast-paced page-turner? Does the plot unfold slowly with a focus on character? Were you surprised by complications, twists & turns? Did you find the plot predictable, even formulaic?
5. Talk about the book's structure. Does the time-line move forward chronologically? Does time shift back & forth from past to present? Is there a single viewpoint or shifting viewpoints? What difference does the structure make in the way you read or understand the book?
7. What passages strike you as insightful, even profound? Perhaps a bit of dialog that's funny or poignant or that encapsulates a character? Maybe there's a particular comment that states the book's thematic concerns?
8. Is the ending satisfying? If so, why? If not, why not...and how would you change it?





The Birthday Lunch

Joan Clark

About the Author

Joan Clark is the author of the novels **Latitudes of Melt**, **The Victory of Geraldine Gull** and **Eiriksdottir**, as well as two short story collections and several award-winning novels for young adults. Born and raised in Nova Scotia, she has lived in various places across Canada with her geotechnical engineer husband Jack. While living in Calgary she became a founding member of the Alberta Writers Guild and co-founded the acclaimed literary journal *Dandelion*. She now lives in St. John's, Newfoundland.

Clark notes that the idea for **An Audience of Chairs** came in part from her own familial legacy of depression, with which she struggled at one time and which led a grandmother to suicide. "One of the things I was interested in was exploring the idea of family pride, which was abundant in my family. So much pride, in fact, that many of them refused to admit that their grandmother had committed suicide." Clark made two false starts at writing this novel, the first time 30 years ago. "When I picked up the novel for the third time four years ago, I was surprised that I was able to indulge my sense of humour, to let go and have fun. Once the humour kicked in, I was off and running."

This book is available for download as an eBook. For more information, please visit lpl.overdrive.com or call 519-661-4600.