

The Chaperone by Laura Moriarty

Meeting date Tuesday, November 13 at 6:30 p.m.

- 1. The Chaperone** opens with Cora Carlisle waiting out a rainstorm in a car with a friend when she hears about Louise Brooks for the first time. What do we learn about Cora in this scene? What does it tell us about her and the world she lives in? Why does Laura Moriarty, the author, choose to open the novel this way? Why do you think she waits to introduce us to Brooks?
2. When we first meet Louise Brooks, she seems to be the complete opposite of Cora, but the two women form an unlikely bond anyway. Are they really so dissimilar? What does Cora learn from Louise? Do you think Louise learns anything from Cora?
3. When Cora arrives in New York, the city is worlds away from her life in Wichita. How much do you think Cora actually embraces New York? When she returns to Wichita, what does she bring back with her from New York? What parts of her stayed true to Wichita all along?
4. The limits of acceptable behavior for women were rapidly changing in the 1920s, and both Cora Carlisle and Louise Brooks, in their own ways, push against these boundaries. Discuss the different ways the two women try to change society's expectations for women. Is one more successful than the other? What are the values involved in each woman's approach?
5. Cora becomes frustrated with the hypocrisy of the women in her Wichita circle of friends and yet she herself chooses to keep details about her own life secret. Do you think she should be more open about her life choices? What are the risks for her if she were to be more open?
6. Cora Carlisle hopes to find the secret of her past in New York City but discovers that the truth doesn't align with either her expectations or her memory of the past. Why do you think Laura Moriarty has chosen to leave Cora's history ambiguous? What does this tell you about Cora? How has Cora's attitude toward her past changed by the end of **The Chaperone**?
7. Cora narrates the events of the book from a perspective of many years later. What juxtapositions does this allow her? By placing Cora's narration at a time of radical social change, what parallels is Moriarty making?
8. Think about Louise Brooks's behavior. How much of it would be considered scandalous today? What values has society held on to? In what ways has society changed?