

BOOK CLUB in a bag

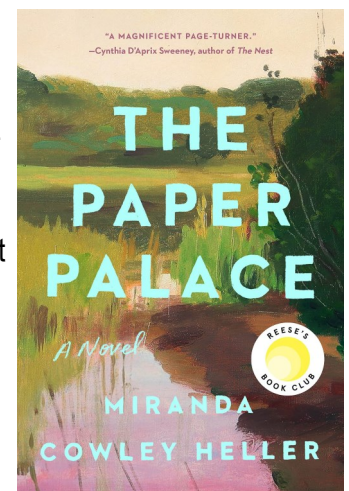


The Paper Palace

Miranda Cowley Heller

Discussion Questions

1. In *The Paper Palace*, desire and duty are put to the test when Elle Bishop has to choose between the life she always believed she was meant to have with her oldest friend Jonas, and the life she has with her loving husband Peter. Compare and contrast Elle's relationships with both. What does she get from each?
2. The novel is set in Cape Cod, a setting the author describes with vivid intimacy. In what ways has this place grounded and shaped the lives of the Bishops?
3. *The Paper Palace* unfolds over 24 hours and 50 years: one day in Elle's life, and the moments that lead to this day. What do we gain through multiple timelines that we otherwise would not?
4. In the multigenerational story, we see the reverberations of the choices made by grandparents and parents, and the scars they have left on Elle herself. In what ways do those scars reveal themselves, and is it possible to break the cycle?
5. The individuals who find themselves at The Paper Palace are as susceptible to the elements as the house is. Consider adult Elle and Jonas's intimate beach scene, their dangerous sailing trip, etc. What role do nature and the weather play in the story? How is the outside, natural world used to echo Elle's interior journey?
6. Secrets are at the heart of the novel: the acts that create them, the decisions to keep them hidden. What is the outcome of keeping secrets and how do we see that play out within the novel? Why do you think Elle keeps the secrets that she does from her family? From Peter? Think of a time when you kept a secret. Was it harmful or helpful?
7. The novel is called *The Paper Palace*. Why? What parallels exist between the camp and the people who inhabit it?
8. Discuss the symbolism of rings (see my analysis above here) in the story. Water is another big motif in the story.
9. What would you change about the book? Were there any choices made by the author that you didn't agree with?



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About the Author

Miranda Cowley Heller has worked as senior vice president and head of drama series at HBO, developing and overseeing such shows as *The Sopranos*, *Six Feet Under*, *The Wire*, *Deadwood*, and *Big Love*, among others. This is her first novel. She grew up spending summers on Cape Cod, and now lives in California.

Via Penguin Random House (<https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/authors/2239913/miranda-cowley-heller/>)

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