

Meet Me in Paris

by KRISTIN HARMEL



READING GROUP GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

Nine Americans in Paris. Seven intertwined love stories. One City of Light.

Julia Glover has brought her twenty-three-year-old daughter, Piper, to Paris for their first—and last—trip together, hoping to make memories as Julia’s time runs out. What neither anticipates is Piper meeting a charming French waiter who might just understand her better than anyone she’s ever met...or Julia, who thought she’d never have another chance at love, making an unexpected connection with a stranger who doesn’t yet know the truth about her future.

Meanwhile, fading rock star Jackson Quick’s glory days are behind him. He had a handful of hit songs thirty years ago, and this week, he’ll launch his reunion tour in Paris, the city where it all began. But he wants more out of life than being defined by fame. When he meets a woman who finally sees him for who he is at his core, the ground shifts beneath his feet.

Henry McGee has been writing hit songs for decades—including Jackson Quick’s biggest hit, “City of Light.” But his secret is that every love song he’s ever written is for a woman he loved a lifetime ago, when they were both teenagers in Paris during World War II. He has spent eighty years believing she died—but when a letter arrives telling him the opposite, he’s on the first flight to France. Can he break through the haze of her dementia and tell her he came back for her?

Henry’s granddaughter, Melody, has just discovered that her husband of twenty years, a French cosmetics executive, is having an affair. When she confronts him, he begs her to forgive him. But can she? And, perhaps even more importantly, does she want to?

In this *Love Actually*-style novel set in the most romantic city in the world, these stories and more intertwine over several luminous spring days as an unforgettable group of Americans in Paris searches for connection, forgiveness, and the courage to choose happiness.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. *Meet Me in Paris* opens with 49-year-old Julia Glover and her 23-year-old daughter, Piper, arriving in Paris for one final trip together before Julia—who has terminal cancer—begins to go downhill. If you were diagnosed with a life-ending illness—and had a short window of time where you felt like yourself before you began to grow sicker, where would you go? What would you do? And perhaps most importantly, who would you want by your side?

2. When Henry McGee first tells his granddaughter, Melanie, that he had a great love of his life before marrying Melanie's grandmother, she's startled; he has never spoken of this other relationship before. Can you think of an important or formative relationship in your own life that you haven't talked about in years? How would you feel if you could reunite with this person?
3. We learn early in the book that Melanie's husband, Gilles, is cheating on her—but Melanie hasn't confronted him yet. What would you do if you found a text message that indicated a big betrayal by your significant other, or by a friend?
4. Jackson Quick had a huge hit song in the late 1990s, but he hasn't toured or recorded new music in years. Over the course of *Meet Me in Paris*, he prepares for and performs the first concert of his comeback tour, which includes an arena full of fans who are thrilled that he's back. What band or singer would you like to see stage a comeback tour now? What would their reunion concert be like? Who would you choose as their opening act? Where should the first show of their tour take place?
5. Piper visits Shakespeare and Company, the famous bookstore, when she's in Paris. Do you have a favorite bookstore? What do you like about it?
6. When Henry first visits Celeste, the long-lost love of his life, she doesn't remember him—and he's determined to break through the fog of her dementia to bring her back. Have you had any experience with a friend or loved one who went through similar memory loss? If so, what did you do to connect with them, even if some of their memories were gone?
7. Piper and her mom visit Paris's Musee d'Orsay and talk about two paintings they saw there: *Starry Night Over the Rhône* and *The Church at Auvers*, both by Vincent Van Gogh. Do you have a favorite painting, or one that you've felt particularly moved by?
8. Kayla has come to Paris in hopes of getting to know her estranged father. But when she begins to spend time with him, she realizes, to her dismay, that they actually have very little in common. Have you ever had the experience of trying to get to know someone you think you'll get along with—only to discover that the relationship is much more difficult than you anticipated?
9. George has been in love with his best friend Lou for many years, but it has taken him until now to summon the courage to say something. And yet we know from the novel that he has, in fact, dated other men. Why do you think it was so difficult with him to be honest with Lou about his feelings?
10. *Meet Me in Paris* is, in many ways, a love letter to the city of Paris itself. As the book unfolds, the characters visit many locations, which play a central role in the story. If you were going to write an ode to a city you love, which city would it be, and why?

ACTIVITIES TO ENHANCE YOUR BOOK CLUB

1. Nicolas takes Piper on a picnic to the Eiffel Tower for apéro, a French tradition of having drinks and a bit of food before dinner to whet the appetite. Create a French-themed apéro for your book club, with champagne, a specialty cocktail (such as a French 75), a mocktail (such as a nonalcoholic French 75, with 2 ounces soda water, 1 ounce tonic, and ½ ounce fresh lemon juice, garnished with a lemon twist), and a variety of French cheeses, served with baguette, cornichons, and pâté.
2. Jackson had a big hit with “City of Light” in the 1990s. Create a '90s playlist of your favorite hits (Kristin's favorite band from the 1990s is Sister Hazel), and add at least one song from the real-life Stephen Kellogg (Jackson's opening act in the book) for good measure.
3. Nadim paints in a small park between the Seine and the Eiffel Tower, trying to capture the city—and the people—around him. Set up a painting or drawing studio for your book club by providing canvas paper and pastels for the group, and ask everyone to try their hands at painting something or someone they love.