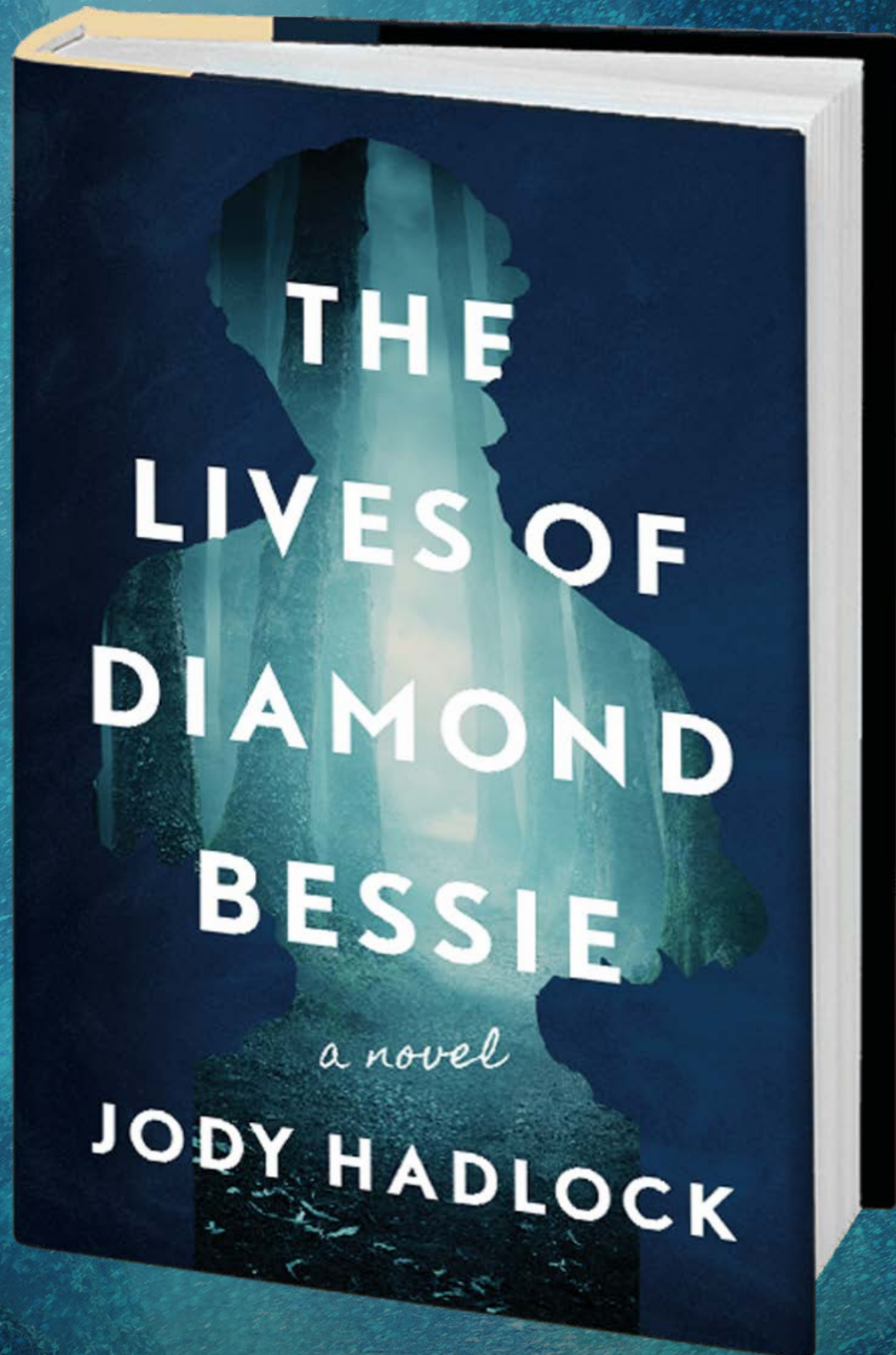


Book Club Kit



Dear Reader,

It's been a very long and winding road to make this book a reality: tons of research, traveling to every place Bessie lived—including Ireland—years where I had to set aside my writing, going through so many drafts that I lost count, and it all led to here: my book, my labor of love, in your hands. I'm truly honored and thrilled that you are considering or have chosen my novel for your book club.



It's always been said that writing is a lonely pursuit, but I disagree. For one thing, you can usually find me writing (or researching) at a coffee shop! No matter where I travel, I always find a local coffeehouse, even though I only drink tea, LOL. But seriously, it's been a true collaboration, with editors, cover and layout designers, and others who help bring a book into the world.

If you'd like me to join your book club discussion by Zoom, I'd love to do so. If needed, you can use my Zoom account. And, depending on where you live, I might even be able to attend in person.

Before you go on to the next section with discussion questions, I should tell you, if you haven't read the book yet, there are spoilers.

And don't miss the last page with The Diamond Bessie cocktail!

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jody". The signature is stylized with large, flowing loops.

Discussion Questions

1. Women have gained many rights since the 1800s. Were you familiar with all the restrictions society placed on women back then? Were you surprised that they would lead women into prostitution? What do you think about how far women have come?
2. Germans and the Irish were the main immigrant groups to the U.S. during the period the book is set. How much did you know about the reasons these groups left their homelands?
3. The author used the Clytie statue as a motif. What did you think of this use of the sculpture and how Bessie's reactions to it changed at different moments of her life?
4. In the 1800s, women were discouraged from reading novels. It was considered dangerous to a woman's mind and even physical health. But women read voraciously. What is your reaction to that kind of thinking back then?
5. What connection do you see between the historical world of Diamond Bessie and today?
6. The theme of the book is forgiveness, of yourself. Do you think we're too hard on ourselves, that we need to be more forgiving, not just of others, but ourselves too?

Discussion Questions

7. Queen Mab (pronounced Maeve) is still a prominent part of Irish folklore. What did you think of the way the author used the fairy in the book?
8. Friendships between women are an important part of the novel. What did you think of the relationship between Bessie and Mollie and Mollie's fate, and the friendship between Bessie and Edla in death?
9. Were you surprised that Abe was acquitted? Do you think if the second trial was held today that he would have been found guilty again? Do you think the fact that Bessie was a prostitute influenced the all-male jury's verdict?
10. Were you surprised about Abe's life of crime after his acquittal and his apparent suicide?
11. It's been nearly 150 years since Bessie's death and she's still remembered. Songs have been written about her, a group in Jefferson has performed a play about her since 1955, and a woman in Albuquerque has a one-woman show about Bessie. Why do you think she is still remembered after all this time?

While I was writing my novel, I learned of a mixologist who creates “literary” cocktails, and I thought it would be fun to have one made for my novel. Chantal Tseng read *The Lives of Diamond Bessie* and created something so meaningful.

She loved Bessie's sojourns in New Orleans. With that as inspiration, Chantal used the vintage La Louisiane cocktail as a launch pad and adjusted the proportions and presentation. The Diamond Bessie is of the time period as well, as the La Louisiane, a whiskey classic, was created sometime in the mid to late 1800's.

Chantal chose Redemption Rye Whiskey “for Bessie's American spirit and for striving to redeem her tragedies and relationships. The French ingredients harken to her love of the French Quarter. The garnish is designed to have a floral look as I appreciated your many descriptions including flowers. And the touch of French Absinthe is for the ghostly, otherworldly undercurrent of the story’s theme. Overall, you should get a fairly auburn hue to match Bessie's lovely hair color.”

THE DIAMOND BESSIE

(created by Chantal Tseng, www.cocktailsforendtimes.com)

Chill a rocks glass

Add to your mixing glass:

- 1.5 oz. Redemption Rye Whiskey
- 1 oz. Dolin Rouge Vermouth
- .5 oz. Green Chartreuse
- .25 oz. Absinthe (like Pernod or Vieux Pontarlier)
- 3-4 dashes of Peychaud's Bitters



See next page for instructions.

Fill the mixing glass with cracked ice and stir the ingredients well for about 10 seconds. Then strain the cocktail into the chilled glass over 1 large piece of fresh ice (ideally an ice diamond).

Garnish with a lemon peel, with the lemon oils expressed over the drink at a 45-degree angle. The peel can be wrapped around a single preserved marasca cherry (not a maraschino cherry) or other brandied cherry.

For better presentation, use one long peel of an entire lemon wrapped into a rosette and place the cherry in the center. Spear it together with a cocktail pick.

Or consider foraging a sprig of fresh lavender or an edible chrysanthemum or pansy for the garnish. Up to you, Chantal says, as long as you keep the lemon oil element intact.

Cheers!