

The Expat Book Club

'Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine'

GAIL HONEYMAN

Discussion Guide



Our Expat Book Club first question is always the same: Did you finish the book...and did you enjoy it?

There are sections of the novel that are laugh out loud funny and some wonderful observations on the absurdity of everyday life. What was your favourite Eleanor-ism?

“These days, loneliness is the new cancer – a shameful, embarrassing thing, brought upon yourself in some obscure way.” (Eleanor Oliphant)
Do you agree with Eleanor? If so, why?

Did Eleanor's loneliness and/or social awkwardness make you reflect on your own experiences as an expat?

Eleanor is dismissed by her work colleagues early in the book as being ‘mental’. Did you take any message from the novel on mental health?

On the subject of mental health, do you think Eleanor's lack of filter and social awkwardness is due to a personality disorder (or autism/ Aspergers)? Or do you think this developed as a result of the trauma she suffered and her subsequent isolation?

Eleanor is an outsider (and, let's face it, pretty weird)...but did you find any similarities between Eleanor and yourself?

Raymond is a very different personality to the musician Eleanor falls for. Did you think the portrayal of Eleanor and Raymond's relationship was realistic?

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Did you guess where 'Mummy' was? Or did this twist in the novel come as a surprise to you?

The quote on back of book is 'Change can be good. Change can be bad. But surely any change is better than....fine.' Does only Eleanor change, or do her co-workers also change in they way they behave towards her? If so, how and why?

In times of stress Eleanor returns to her copy of Jane Eyre. What parallels do you think the author is trying to make between the two characters?

'There is no happiness like that of being loved by your fellow creatures, and feeling that your presence is an addition to their comfort.' (Jane Eyre, Charlotte Brontë)

Eleanor is an unusual and quirky charter or, as one critic described her, 'an acerbic, non-communicative sociopath'. Did she evoke your sympathy, and if so, why? And if she didn't...why not?

The novel has many themes, but the standout message is that even the smallest acts of kindness can have transformative power. Would you agree with this?

This book is both tragic and comic. Overall, did you find it hopeful or sad?

How did you feel when you finished the book?

The film rights to the book have already been bought by Reese Witherspoon. Do you think the film would work well if set in the US rather than Scotland? And...who would you pick to play Eleanor?!