

Book Club Questions

Jean Paré: An Appetite for Life
-written by Judy Schultz

1. The chapters in this biography are fittingly set up like a meal. How else is food reflective of Jean's story? Give examples of food-rich language used by author Judy Schultz.
2. In the story, Jean brings one rose to a sick friend each week – and buys herself a rose at the same time (page 31). Why does she do this? Does she feel the need for love and beauty? How does this relationship differ from her friendship with the women in her coffee group later in life?
3. Jean Paré is leaving a legacy of recipes and cookbooks for future generations. What other kinds of legacies do people leave for family, friends and society?
4. Do you think Company's Coming cookbooks are a part of the Canadian identity? Are the recipes more than a means to create meals?
5. Jean Paré's family is central to structure, plot and meaning. It is the source of grief and longing, but also of security and togetherness. How do you think Jean and each of her children deal with this dualism?
6. Jean Paré is a small-town hero – we all feel connected to her because she's real. What if she had lived a privileged life, all the while happily married to her first real love? Would we have been as impressed if she wrote a cookbook? Do her humble beginnings and real-life struggles affect the end result?
7. Where do you think Judy Schultz's writing style and her use of language is most finely tuned, most powerfully worked out? Do you find her approach fully satisfying? Do you feel anything is lacking? Have you read anything else by Judy Schultz? How does this biography compare to her other works?
8. What changes occur in Jean after Clarence, her first husband, leaves for good? How do these changes help her move on with her life and to eventually found Company's Coming?
9. Jean's love of travelling and exploration of new foods has played an important role in her professional life. How have Jean's experiences shaped her style of cooking? What experiences have you had that influence the way you cook or relate to food? How important a role does home cooking play in your life?
10. How did family and friends play a part in the creation and success of Company's Coming Publishing Limited?
11. The eighth chapter, titled "Coffee & Conversations" includes sections about each of the four Lovig children. Why do you think Schultz did this?
12. Jean experiences a defining moment when she crosses the High Level Bridge and contemplates jumping (page 38). Is there a stand-alone incident that has dramatically changed your outlook on life?
13. Do you feel abused women in our society are finally receiving adequate support from the community?
14. Life during World War II and the Depression were difficult years for Jean and for society. What good things happened during this time period?
15. What's the one thing you would have said to Jean during her struggles?