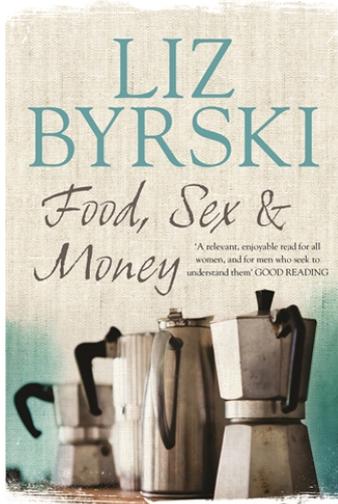


BOOK CLUB DISCUSSION POINTS



Thank you for choosing *Food, Sex and Money* for your book club. Here are some discussion points you may like to use.

In *Food, Sex & Money* Bonnie, Fran and Sylvia are faced with the challenge of reconnecting and re-establishing a friendship after forty years. They are all surprised and delighted at the comparative ease with which this happens and relish the way it enriches their lives. With so many people now re-connecting with old friends through the Internet and email, readers might like to discuss personal experiences, both positive and negative, of meeting up again with childhood friends.

The relationships between Bonnie and Irene, Fran and Lila, Fran and Caro and Sylvia and Kym describe the tensions, the joys, the heartaches and the rewards of mother-daughter relationships. Are they ever simple and straightforward? And what are the tensions and confusions of the shifting of responsibility between parents and children that develop as we grow older?

Fran's fear of Lila's deterioration presents her with major challenges at both emotional and practical levels. Does she take the right decision? Should she give up her new life at The Boatshed to care for her mother? Would a man in the same situation consider giving up his new business to care for his ageing parent?

Was Sylvia selfish in deciding not to move to England and act as a carer for her grandchildren? Do you feel that women are sometimes emotionally pressured by family members into performing particular roles which are at odds with what they want for themselves?

Bonnie is horrified at the thought of her mother having a sexual relationship with Hamish. The reality of our parents as sexual beings is often confronting – is it more challenging as they grow older?

Sexuality is a part of being human and we live in a society where sex is all around us in entertainment and advertising. But sex is always associated with youth and beauty and we rarely seem images of older people in relation to sex. Why are we so unwilling to acknowledge and celebrate sexuality in the elderly? What are some of the problems of this for older people?

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David is constrained in his approach to Jody because he has Hepatitis C, but Jody tells him he is in danger of defining himself by his condition. Is she being fair about this? Is she taking a realistic view of his condition and how it affects them, or do you feel she is too hard on him?

Fran faces the challenge of her sexuality in mid-life and discovers that she has fallen in love with another woman. She asks Lenore whether it means that she (Fran) has always been a Lesbian, or whether she has simply become one because she has fallen in love with Lenore. What do you think? Does it really matter?

Lila wonders why, in some families women are respected as the matriarchs, and as the source of wisdom, whereas in her family no one takes much notice of her opinions. Why does this happen in some families and not others?

Bonnie suggests that in her relationship with Will, and particularly in the way she ends it, Sylvia has behaved like a man. What does she mean by this? Is it fair comment or a sign of Bonnie's own prejudice?

Both Jeff and Jack are portrayed as men in their fifties who aren't easily able to articulate their feelings or deal with emotional crises. Are they unusual in this or are they typical of men of their generation?

A lifetime of unexpressed grief leads Bonnie to an emotional breakdown of the most embarrassing kind. Will she be able to deal with Jack again as a business associate or will it always stand between them?

Did Will really change as result of his relationship with Sylvia? Or is he destined always to be a pirate in the relationship stakes?

Can you imagine starting a business like The Boatshed with friends? What would the challenges be for you? And what about the rewards?

I do hope you enjoy your discussion.