

BOOK CLUB MEETING: Notes

Want to see the movie... they should make a movie
who the leading man be?

loved the book
cast of characters - interactions
resourcefulness
embracing life

surprised himself
his resilience - adapting to situation and circumstances

we take something from everyone we come in contact with

really challenge to write something that holds interest in one location
kept my interest
not a quick read

such pleasure in the details
the writer, the narrator and the Count
the beauty the joy in the little details

the clock

the narration fir the character to a tee
a very gentlemanly book
slow thoughtful narration
each word carefully selected

love the count for who he is
maybe because he was an aristocrat
he embraced life

the apple blossom in the honey - resilience
the beauty in a gesture or a hand or nature
he embodies that so beautifully

Mishka - he tell Count he the luckiest man in the world
he saved from the reality of the new Society Union

Casablanca - the tipping of the glass
order amid chaos

Stalin's Daughter, Rosemary Sullivan
http://www.rbctaylorprize.ca/2016/winner_16.asp

A Gentleman in Moscow Book Club Notes

hard to get into the pace at the start - until Nina appeared

had not had to read - would have DNF
nothing happening... damn hotel

imagine what could happen to make your life interesting
little girl with pass key
the most beautiful woman in Russia

kind of a fantasy
like Grand Budapest Hotel

the flavour varies
the scene with the dogs in them lobby - laughing pants off
later on - the pace gets hectic - the level of tension
i.e. steal hotel stationary to get barber out of the barbershop
can't put the book down

being played by the writer
only became man of action for Sofia

Katerina comes back - ask where going - it doesn't matter
that prompt him into action

second time reading it - does feel like a light romp
has a lightness to it

little structural curiosities
every chapter begins with A
every time a new year starts... it's on June 21 - date he was arrested
years as a sequence - doubling principle
(see <http://www.amortowles.com/gentleman-moscow-amor-towles/gentleman-moscow-qa-amor-towles>)
narrator speaking as a Russian - is it true to the Russian experience
interplay between Russian tensions and the evolution of the Soviet Union

p173 - subtleties of the facts of the Soviet state
also aristocrats as representatives of the west

Osip - achievements happen at cost
American success came at a cost as well
BOTH US and USSR built their advances on the suffering of others

collectivization - failure of...

A Gentleman in Moscow Book Club Notes

hints of a critique of South Africa and Zimbabwe currently

impact on artists
parallel to Do Not Say We Have Nothing

Osip - talking about American movies
films of the Depression - fantasy dangled before them

echoes Marx as relying as opiate of the people - in the US it's sports entertainment

Casablanca - encourage Americans to enter WW2
put out there at just the right time
you need to self sacrifice - you need to help
Bogart finding purpose in sticking his neck out
when Rick stand up that glass - whose order is he standing for - whose order is he
disrupting by standing up this glass

Count unlikeable for most of the book
what has the Count erased?
what do you lose when you take out pieces?

George 5 cousin to Tsar Nicholas II
<https://rarehistoricalphotos.com/king-george-tsar-nicholas-1913/>

Russians ill suited to rule by the people - no history of it

Osip - clearly to keep Count out of trouble
he realize Count can help him
middle management workings in this system
not matter communist or where or what - how can you take advantage of circumstance
process leads them to being good friends

delight - the saffron - the bouillabaisse - beautiful

the 'Bishop' - the petty bureaucrat who rises to be in charge
Murphy's Law
beautifully named
yippee moment when he locks him up

literary miss - talk with Sofia about defecting
want to hear what Sofia had to say
as in other places
want to know more about this relationship

the ending - have a hard time with it
do you wish if it had been different

A Gentleman in Moscow Book Club Notes

no - because my life would have been meaningless
serendipity
go back to page 322... it's about letting the young take flight
also political - hands off, be watchful...
wine labels... change is sudden
p144 - on the pace of change - generations vs overnight

his relationship with women are all abbreviated
Marina... Anna...

fall from grace - assumption of humility
(halfway through "Afternoon assignation", p 196)
on Anna's resurgence in popularity
breaks the fourth wall...

the Metropol
real hotel
still there
history of entertaining American elite and artists
hotel life is true to reality

consideration and reconsideration...
the beautiful possibilities of humanity

talked about letting go of material possessions
relationships become more important to him
just a few things he hangs onto
over time as he developed other relationships it was not the only important relationship

Bishop having his finger snooping everywhere
omniscient bad guy
he was a Party dude

the games - the flavour of the relationship between Nina and Sofia
the play

moment when life in total becomes possible
physical space and mental space
life became liveable
his own sanctuary

life in 'button boxes' - so compartmented
they have conversation behind his back
what Anna did was key to Sofia being able to leave

A Gentleman in Moscow Book Club Notes

the reveal I like
plot twists - tell you what happened a little - or a lot - later
really liked - Mishka had penned the poem
it saved his life - he'd have been shot
everything fall into place
he never wrote another poem - he never lied about it
how fit with free wheeling aristocratic character
he had no work ethic himself...
great piece of work attributed to him - but it's not actually his...

the ending
cloak and dagger stuff
the telephones - over the top

knew he wasn't going to Paris to here her
picked up Finnish guidebook front of Bishop - not give him that clue
he would here her if she were on the moon - he not going to hear her

why did he stay after he got his grandmother out?
it's home

Other Random Stuff...

Dolly Parton

Dumplin' (YA novel by Julie Murphy - one of Enid's favourites of the last few years) is coming out as a movie

Dolly Parton has done theme song - Here I Am

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D_7btgvr9LU

Red Hat Society

<https://www.redhatsociety.com>

for girls who want to have fun

\$30 a year for membership

Toronto International Festival of Authors

<https://festivalofauthors.ca>

Wed Oct 24th: Eden Robinson and Cherie Dimaline

Sat Oct 27th: Esi Edugyan and Meg Wolitzer

A Gentleman in Moscow Book Club Notes

Cathy's Library

Mon Oct 29th: Eden Robinson

Massey Lecture (Toronto)

<https://www.cbc.ca/radio/ideas/the-2018-cbc-massey-lectures-all-our-relations-1.4763007>

Tues Oct 30th: Koerner Hall