

EIDA book club: *Klaxon*

A note on domestic abuse: Domestic abuse includes physical or sexual abuse, violent or threatening behaviour, emotional abuse, controlling or coercive behaviour, economic abuse, psychological, emotional, or other abuse. Domestic abuse can happen to anyone. If you're worried that someone is being abused, let them know you've noticed something is wrong. Listen to and believe victims/survivors when they choose to tell you about their situation.

Book	<i>Klaxon</i> by Niamh Bryan
Key Themes	<i>Klaxon</i> explores issues of coercive control, domestic abuse, and the role that family, friends and work colleagues play in supporting victims of domestic abuse or shoring up the behaviour of perpetrators.
Summary	<p>Louise juggles a demanding job and an even more demanding husband, Mark. Over the years she has learnt to bite her tongue and avoid confrontation for the sake of their son, Zach. After all, she has everything she always wanted – and no one's family is perfect, is it?</p> <p>But Mark is becoming increasingly unpredictable and when she makes an eclectic new group of friends on a weekend away in Norfolk, Louise begins to realise how dysfunctional her life has become.</p> <p>Once Mark gets wind that something has changed, a chain of events is set in motion that destroys everything that Louise has been clinging onto.</p>
Discussion Questions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The redemptive power of love is a common theme in literature and fairy tales. Does this belief make it harder to recognise abusive relationships?2. In <i>Klaxon</i>, Nigel is Louise's line manager. How do his actions enable Mark to curtail Louise's career development? What other approaches might he have taken that might have led to better outcomes for Louise?3. What is the role of Louise's family, her friends like Melissa, or colleagues, when they suspect domestic abuse? Should they sound the <i>Klaxon</i> - and if so, how loudly?4. How do you respond when the person being abused is not able or willing to recognise the abuse or take action to protect themselves? In particular, do Celestine's actions, in the last third of the book, go too far?

Reviews

Amazon

Sue Barrow UK

5.0 out of 5 stars / Amazon

Compelling Read, Unable to put the book down.

"The story was fiction: The psychology is real. This is the most compelling description of the psychology of being controlled in a relationship by both a partner and the false beliefs created by society: Love does not conquer all.

There are many books and numerous training sessions on Domestic abuse. Still, nothing else has ever come close to communicating and understanding victims' psychology and conflicting emotions as this book by Niamh Bryan does.

To achieve this in such a readable narrative is mind-blowing. I hope this enables them to be wider supported in their communities and their decisions understood. This makes the book sound like a safeguarding course. It is, maybe, but it is also an inspired work of fiction—a very talented writer."

Goodreads

Miriam USA

"Where do I start 😊😊😊 this is a phenomenal book. It touches on real hard subjects but doesn't romanticize them.

Louise goes on holiday to a windmill for what she learns is a wellness retreat. She is apprehensive and resistant at first but soon finds what she needs to help her decide what her next moves are in terms of her husband. Her husband is not a good guy and by the end of the book you'll fully understand exactly why. Louise is facing some very real danger and you'll ask yourself throughout the book "why?! Why aren't you just making the decisions you know you need to make?!" Is it ever really that easy though? This is written from the perspective of real life, in real life situations like this, women feel stuck. We see Louise have to come to terms with what is and not what she wants it to be. It's a hard read in the sense of you will feel everything Louise feels. You will cry with her and be mad with and at her but it will all come full circle and then you'll root for her. This is an amazing read and I highly recommend it."

Samantha Beckinsale, actress and domestic abuse campaigner

"Klaxon is one of those rare finds - an artistic creation that has the power to change how we as a society think and feel about something serious. It's a game changer on every level - personally, societally, politically - all rolled up in a rollicking, totally addictive and thrilling storyline, with brilliantly honed, utterly believable and recognisable characters. I literally couldn't put it down and you just wait 'til the end!!"

EIDA book club: *Purple Hibiscus*

Book	<i>Purple Hibiscus</i> by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie
Key Themes	The story of a young Nigerian girl, Kambili, and her family. The novel tackles themes of identity, freedom, oppression and abuse, love and tradition and explores the tensions within Kambili's family and within the country of Nigeria itself.
Summary	<p>The limits of fifteen-year-old Kambili's world are defined by the high walls of her family estate and the dictates of her fanatically religious father. Her life is regulated by schedules: prayer, sleep, study, prayer.</p> <p>When Nigeria is shaken by a military coup, Kambili's father, involved mysteriously in the political crisis, sends her to live with her aunt. In this house, noisy and full of laughter, she discovers life and love – and a terrible, bruising secret deep within her family.</p> <p><i>"Fear. I was familiar with fear, yet each time I felt it, it was never the same as the other times, as though it came in different flavours and colours."</i></p>
Discussion Questions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discuss the idea of using religion to justify abuse. 2. Symbolism is strong in the novel. Discuss the symbolism of the novel's title, <i>Purple Hibiscus</i>. 3. There is a difference between Kambili's father's public image and the abuse that he perpetrates at home. How does Kambili's family cope with this discrepancy? 4. Over the course of the book, Kambili's relationship with her family and religion changes through her interactions with other characters and her experiences. What did you think of this change? 5. How did you react, as a reader, to Kambili's mother's reactions to her abuse?
Reviews	<p>Amazon</p> <p>Books R Best 5/5 stars. Reviewed in the United Kingdom on 6 April 2021</p> <p>"I loved it. I'm usually wary of top prize-winning books but this one is different. I loved it. Set in Nigeria the author describes an abusive childhood, and the effect it has on the whole family. Her world is small, enclosed, monitored yet despite the tyranny from her father, he does much good in the community, often anonymously. The difference to life in the house of her aunt highlights two separate worlds. To fight the system</p>

means death. To escape the system means emigration. Beautifully written, a book I shall not forget for years to come."

Norman Housley

5/5 stars

United Kingdom on 3 October 2014

"What a terrific book this is. There is so much packed into its comparatively short span. First and foremost, it's a rite of passage novel, with the narrator/heroine growing up sexually, emotionally, politically and above all in her perception of her father. Then again, it's an insightful study in domestic tyranny, wisely eschewing black and white judgements about the father's behaviour. And it's also a wonderful location book, bringing Nigeria to life without indulging in any purple prose. The construction is masterly, and Adichie creates atmosphere and character without any cost to pace. That's quite an achievement. I seldom give five stars but in this instance, anything less would be unfair, though it has to be said that occasionally the claustrophobia of the parental home makes it rather grim reading."

Goodreads

Elif

5/5 stars

September 10, 2016

"This was my second novel by Adichie and so different from Americanah and yet so, so good. It's mostly about a family and with very religious father who's extremely abusive and how the protagonist Kambili and her brother Jaja learn to see that he's flawed and emancipate themselves with the help of their aunt. Sounds simple, doesn't it? But it was so authentic and well-written that I couldn't stop reading. I was fascinated by the characters and how there's no black and white, good and evil. And how some things are still bad and evil although the person doing them might not be. In a calm, smart way Adichie manages to capture humankind in such a realistic way that this book deserves nothing less than 5 stars."