

**BOOK
CLUB
GUIDE**

ENORMOUS WINGS

A NOVEL

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Welcome to the Book Club Guide for

ENORMOUS WINGS

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Please Note: In order to provide book clubs with the most informed and thought-provoking questions possible, it is necessary to reveal aspects of the book. If you have not finished reading *Enormous Wings*, you may want to wait before reviewing this guide.

1. So just for starters, do you buy the premise here? A pregnant seventy-seven-year-old? Are you able to suspend your disbelief? Are you convinced by Dr. Kim's explanations, or are you content to have an element of magic in a novel that is otherwise realist?
2. How does this remarkable pregnancy serve as a metaphor for issues of female agency and health care in this novel? What about issues of senior agency and health care?
3. What links are there between the choices elders get to make (and don't get to make) and the choices pregnant people get to make (and don't get to make)?
4. Pepper tells the reader about teaching a short story by Gabriel García Márquez called "A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings." How do the themes and moral of that story apply to this novel? How else do enormous wings feature here?
5. Pepper's three adult children are very different from one another. Whose approach to caring for Pepper seems best or kindest or most effective and whose least? Which of these parent/adult-child relationships was most relatable to you?
6. Maisie tells Pepper that Moth is very popular, and indeed, everyone wants to dance with him at Senior Prom. He could date just about anyone, which we suspect has been true for many years, but he chooses only Pepper, and chooses her at once and unwaveringly. Why her, and what does it tell you about him?
7. Pepper also falls in love with Moth at more or less first sight. She falls for Maisie and Dot just as quickly. Are relationships easier or closer as we age?
8. Why do you think the author opens the book with a profane Episcopal priest? What is Father Frank's role in this story?

9. Dot's reaction to her cancer diagnosis is "One of these days, you get something you won't live through. Happens to the best of us. And, come to think of it, the worst." How does Dot go about the process of dying? What role does her dying play in a book about new life?
10. Do you like Roger? Does Pepper? Discuss their version of divorce and their relationship all these years later.
11. Are you convinced by Moth's arguments that there are lots of ways it's easier for older adults to parent an infant? What have Darcy and Alice sacrificed to parenthood that Pepper and Moth wouldn't have to?
12. Pro-choice and anti-choice activists are *both* interested in Pepper as a spokesperson. Why does each side think Pepper embodies their cause? How do abortion arguments on both sides differ from the ones we all know when the abortion-seeker is an old woman?
13. How have Maisie, Dot, and Pepper's pre-*Roe v. Wade* memories shaped their positions on reproductive care? Are there other policy areas where we are or should be taking guidance from the wisdom of the elders?
14. As Pepper notes, there are a handful of women even older than she is who've been pregnant and given birth to healthy babies. And of course, there are more than a handful of people who become parents (or become parents again) in their old age. Some are men. Some are, say, raising their grandchildren, or adopting later in life. There are also record numbers of seniors caring for their partners alone, a number which is expected to grow significantly in the coming decades. How different are these examples from what's depicted in this novel? How can we better support elderly caregivers? How can we better support caregivers and parents no matter their age?
15. We are all, of course, aging at every stage of our lives. In what ways is getting older freeing and in what ways constraining? What's opened up in your life as you've aged and what's closed down?
16. Probably you've never been pregnant at seventy-seven, but odds are good you've performed age-defying feats. Discuss ways you've flouted age-related expectations. Discuss goals for doing so going forward.
17. Listen to Lola's playlist—maybe take a road trip or have a dance party. She's included each song for a reason that links to the story. Why do you think she's chosen each of the songs she has? What do you make of the fact that some of the songs are her generation's faves while others were popular before she was born? How frequently do you like or listen to music much older or younger than you?

LOLA'S ROADTRIP PLAYLIST

[Spotify playlist](#)

"Good Luck, Babe!" Chappell Roan

This is such a good, rueful, sad-but-it's-gonna-be-okay break-up song.

Plus the lyric: "I just wanna love someone who calls me baby" (as Pepper does)

"Daydream Believer," The Monkees

"A daydream believer and a homecoming queen" = Moth and Pepper

"I could hide 'neath the wings of the bluebird as she sings" = Lola and Pepper

(Also this song is just the best)

"The Man," Taylor Swift

Is there a catchier song about gender hypocrisy? I think not. Special shout-out to the [video](#).

"Harmony Hall," Vampire Weekend

"Anger wants a voice. Voices wanna sing. Singers harmonize till they can't hear anything. I thought that I was free from all that questioning, but every time a problem ends another one begins...I don't wanna live like this, but I don't wanna die."

"No Time At All," Andrea Martin from Pippin

This one is sung by Pippin's grandma. For a while, it was the epigraph for the book. We couldn't get rights, but the whole song is basically perfect.

"Maybe it's meant the hours I've spent feeling broken and bent and unwell, but there's still no cure so heaven-sent as the chance to raise some hell."

"Ex's & Oh's," Elle King

Such a great post-break-up empowerment song

"These Boots Are Made For Walkin,'" Nancy Sinatra

Break-up song...with boots!

"Roar," Katy Perry

This one's an anthem to girl strength and power.

"I'm Still Standing," Elton John

Because when empowered is asking too much, sometimes standing is enough.

"I'm still standing better than I ever did, looking like a true survivor, feeling like a little kid. I'm still standing after all this time, picking up the pieces of my life without you on my mind."

"About Damn Time," Lizzo

Here's to aftermath songs! The goal isn't strong-all-the-time; the goal is strong-eventually.

"I've been so down and under pressure. I'm way too fine to be this stressed. I'm not the girl I was or used to be. Bitch, I might be better."

"Levitating," Dua Lipa (feat. DaBaby)

Is this a grandmother-granddaughter love song? Who can say?

"If you wanna run away with me, I know a galaxy, and I can take you for a ride" and "You can fly away with me tonight. Baby, let me take you for a ride."

"Feeling Good," Nina Simone

Maybe the best feel-good song ever. Probably where the title comes from.

"Birds flying high, you know how I feel...It's a new dawn, it's a new day, it's a new life for me, and I'm feeling good."

"Underdog," Alicia Keys

This is a whole book of underdogs, and also there's this lyric:

"On the run from a country where they put you in prison for being a woman and speaking your mind."

"Never Tear Us Apart," INXS

"I told you that we could fly 'cause we all have wings, but some of us don't know why."

"Glory," (originally performed by Common, John Legend, and Selma), The Civil Acts

Also a one-time epigraph for this novel: "No one can win the war individually. It takes the wisdom of the elders and young people's energy. Welcome to the story we call victory."

“Polyester Bride,” Liz Phair

Suuuuch good questions:

“Do you want to be a polyester bride? Do you want to hang your head and die? Do you want to find alligator cowboy boots they just put on sale? Do you want to flap your wings and fly away from here?”

“Texas Hold ’Em,” Beyonce

A song that starts “This ain’t Texas (woo)” is perfect for this roadtrip, but later we also get: “There’s a heatwave coming at us, too hot to think straight, too cold to panic. All of the problems just feel dramatic, and now we’re running to the first spot that we find.”

“Land of Lola,” Billy Porter from Kinky Boots

I mean, it’s literally called “Land of Lola”
“Leave that humdrum place of glum behind...
Come and take my hand, and welcome to the land of Lola.”

“I Will Survive,” Gloria Gaynor

Is it even possible to break up with a boy and not listen to this song on repeat?

“Messy,” Lola Young

Lolas unite!

“No,” Meghan Trainor

Remixing “just say no” for the badass-teenage-girl set

“Survivor,” Destiny’s Child

“You thought that I’d be weak without you, but I’m stronger. You thought that I’d be broke without you, but I’m richer. You thought that I’d be sad without you; I laugh harder. You thought I wouldn’t grow without you, now I’m wiser. You thought that I’d be helpless without you, but I’m smarter.” Etc.

“Don’t Dream It’s Over,” Crowded House

“There’s a battle ahead — many battles are lost — but you’ll never see the end of the road while you’re traveling with me.”

“The Promise,” The Calculus Affair

Such a creepy song if it’s your stalker speaking, so heartwarming if it’s your grandma
“If you need a friend, don’t look to a stranger. You know in the end, I’ll always be there. And when you’re in doubt, and when you’re in danger, take a look all around, and I’ll be there.”
(Bonus fun fact: The Calculus Affair is married to the author.)

“Pink Pony Club,” Chappell Roan

Bookends! CR kicked us off so brings us home. Love this promise that if home stifles and confines and won’t let a girl spread her wings, well, there’s always California.

PEPPER’S READING LIST

1. **“A Very Old Man With Enormous Wings: A Tale For Children”** by Gabriel García Márquez
2. **100 Years of Solitude** by Gabriel García Márquez
3. **No Stone Unturned: The Life and Times of Maggie Kuhn** by Maggie Kuhn
4. **The Wolf Hall trilogy** by Hilary Mantel
5. **As You Like It** by William Shakespeare
6. **Hamlet** by William Shakespeare
7. **Romeo and Juliet** by William Shakespeare
8. **Anna Karenina** by Leo Tolstoy
9. **Bleak House** by Charles Dickens
10. **The Great Gatsby** by F. Scott Fitzgerald
11. **1984** by George Orwell
12. **William Howard Taft: The American Presidents Series: The 27th President, 1909-1913** by Jeffrey Rosen
13. **The Clan of the Cave Bear** by Jean M. Auel
14. **Madeline** by Ludwig Bemelmans
15. **Charlie and the Chocolate Factory** by Roald Dahl
16. **The Canterbury Tales** by Geoffrey Chaucer

Retirement Bingo Card

B I N G O

Move In

Your Children
"Weigh In"
on Your Life
Choices

Share a Hard
Candy with
Someone Sweet

Find a
New
Wrinkle

See the
Doctor

Play Bingo
with Your
Friends

Remember
Something
Unimportant

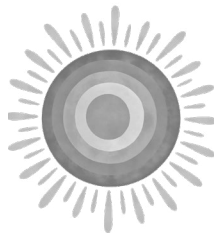
Read a
Good Book

Be Told You're
a "Medical
Mystery"

Get an Ice
Cream Sundae
Headache

You Flirt
with a Nurse

Call an Old
Friend



Your Family
Visits

Forget
Something You
Just Said

Fall in Love
(again)

Mashed
Potatoes for
Dinner

Butt Dial
Someone on
Accident

Make New
Friends

Get Out
and Vote

Play the
"Why am I in
pain?" game

See the
Doctor
(again)

Put Yourself to
Sleep Singing
a Lullaby

Late-Night
Cravings

Find
Something You
Lost

Horde got you down? Medical establishment driving you round the bend? Not enough dirty cars in the world to get you sanely through the headlines? It's a tough time. This chart will help you figure out what you can do to make a difference.

FIRST QUESTION: Have you been affected by insufficient medical care, limited abortion access, curtailed freedoms, disingenuous online discourse, challenging family members, and/or the indignities of aging?

