

READING GROUP GUIDE

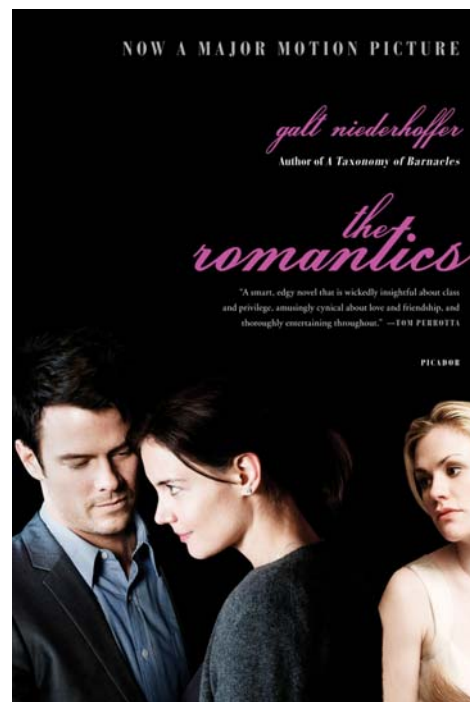
The Romantics

A Novel

by Galt Niederhoffer

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About this Guide

The following author biography and list of questions about *The Romantics* are intended as resources to aid individual readers and book groups who would like to learn more about the author and this book. We hope that this guide will provide you a starting place for discussion, and suggest a variety of perspectives from which you might approach *The Romantics*.

About the Book

Laura and Lila were college roommates--one brooding and Jewish, the other the epitome of golden WASP-dom. Now it's ten years later, a day before Lila's wedding to Laura's former boyfriend, and as the guests arrive, Laura finds herself the only one not coupled up. Struggling with the traditionally thankless role of maid of honor, Laura realizes for the first time why she can't stop thinking about her long, tangled relationship with the groom. And it appears that he is not entirely ready for the altar himself. Unfolding over two days off the coast of Maine, *The Romantics* follows the shifting allegiances among an unforgettable set of characters.

About the Author

GALT NIEDERHOFFER started her own film production company, Plum Pictures, in her twenties. She has produced eleven movies, three of them Sundance Award-winners. She lives in New York City.

Discussion Questions

1. At the start of the book, we learn that “rivalry glued the girls together in a way that regular contact could not.” How does their rivalry hold them together? How does competition mix with affection? Do you think rivalry can be a good thing in friendships?
2. The novel can be read as a satire of Wasp culture and the privileged lives of these Ivy League graduates. What are the common traits of Wasp culture in the author’s description, and how do they influence the characters and the story?
3. What keeps Laura and Lila together, despite their resentments? What does each of them get from their friendship?
4. The author describes the landscape of the island, and the Northern Gardens property, in great detail. What role does this landscape play in the story, both symbolically and in terms of dictating the characters’ behavior?
5. “When men and women grow apart, Laura had found, it is for the same reason they are drawn together; because they are finally, inherently too different. Friendships among women, on the other hand, were burdened by familiarity.” Do you agree with Laura’s assessment? How does this distinction play out in the story? Has it been true in your own relationships?
6. How would you describe the author’s method of narration in telling this story? Why do you think she chose this mode? Does the tone and style remind you of any other authors in particular?
7. “With every inch they grew apart,” the narrator says of the group of friends, “they held more tightly to each other, as though maintaining the friendships might enable them to keep their grasp on youth itself.” How do you think holding on to youth plays into each character’s behavior in the story? How has it affected their lives as individuals? Are there some characters that you think are more attached to their youth than others?
8. How did your perception of Lila change when the novel’s point of view shifted from Laura’s to Lila’s own? Did Lila become more or less sympathetic?
9. What holds this group of friends together? Is it simply common history, or have their attachments to each other evolved with their adult lives?

10. Look at the game the characters play in Chapter 12. Why do you think they deliberately risk being discovered here? Do they want their transgressions to be found out? If so, why?

11. This is a novel full of unhappy couples, despite the fact that the characters are mostly young, attractive, intelligent, well-educated and wealthy. What does the story say about what it takes to have a happy relationship and a happy life?

12. In the end, do you think Tom makes a good choice? Does Laura?

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