



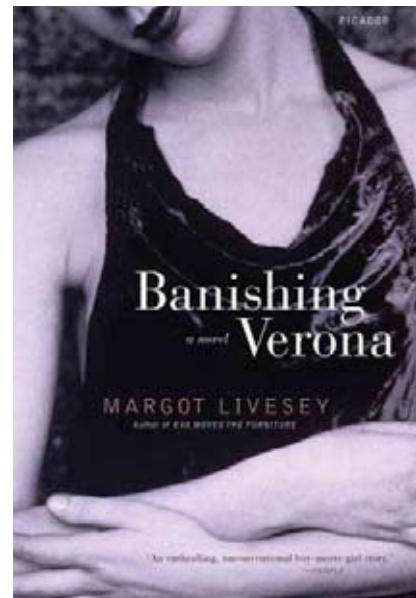
Reading Group Gold

Banishing Verona

by Margot Livesey

About this Guide

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



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About the Book

Zeke is twenty-nine, a man who looks like a Raphael angel and who earns his living as a painter and carpenter in London. He reads the world a little differently from most people and has trouble with such ordinary activities as lying, deciphering expressions, recognizing faces. Verona is thirty-seven, confident, hot-tempered, a modestly successful radio-show host, unmarried, and seven months pregnant. When the two meet in a house that Zeke is renovating, they fall in love, only to be separated less than twenty-four hours later when Verona mysteriously disappears.

Both Zeke and Verona, it turns out, have complications in their lives, though not of a romantic kind. Verona's involve her brother, Henry, who is embroiled in shady financial dealings. Zeke's father has had a heart attack, and his mother is threatening to run away with her lover. And yet, knowing as little as he does about her, Zeke is consumed only with finding Verona.

"[Livesey's] great gift is for concrete, tactile detail. Characters' appearances are rendered with startling vividness...And Livesey has a wonderful way with evocations of atmosphere and states of mind." —*The New York Times Book Review*

"In *Banishing Verona*, Livesey, a first-rate storyteller, examines the ties that bind families and lovers. Her take on life is original, her use of perspective is deft, and her prose lovely. Zeke is captivating." —*USA Today*

"Tantalizing...Livesey has taken a familiar plot device and has turned it into such a delicious literary construct that it seems new." —*Seattle Post-Intelligencer*



Reading Group Gold

“Remarkable...In *Banish Verona*, [Livesey] weaves a story that has plenty of heft—and that challenges the reader to rethink their own notions about the power of romantic love.” —*People*

About the Author

Margot Livesey is the award-winning author of a story collection, *Learning by Heart*, and of the novels *Homework*, *Criminals*, *The Missing World*, and *Eva Moves the Furniture*, which was a *New York Times* *Notable Book*, an *Atlantic Monthly* Best Book of the Year, and a PEN/Winship finalist. Born in Scotland, she currently lives in the Boston area, where she is writer in residence at Emerson College.

Discussion Questions

1. What makes Verona flee after the first night she spends with Zeke? Why does she nail her clothes to the floor? How does Zeke understand this gesture?
2. Zeke often feels ill at ease with other people yet in less than forty-eight hours he falls in love with Verona. Why does he respond to her so strongly? Verona is seven months pregnant and the host of a radio show. What attracts her to a man who paints houses for a living and can't tell jokes?
3. How does Zeke function in the world? Why is resorting antique clocks the perfect hobby for him and why does he think that the clocks amplify his spirit? Zeke tells a nurse that his feelings stay constant as cathedrals. Is this true? How does he cope with the fact that other people are less reliable? What caused his breakdown?
4. One of Henry's teachers claims that he was born without a conscience but Henry insists that he does have a conscience, he just ignores it. What sort of a man is Henry? How does he rationalize what he does with his grandfather's will? Verona says she and Henry share the same corrupt moral gene. Do you agree? Why does Verona feel such a sense of responsibility to Henry when he clearly thinks only about himself?
5. Verona, Zeke and Toby each earn their living doing something they would probably do even if they weren't paid. How is Henry's attitude to money different? How does this affect his relationship with his sister, his best friend and the woman he hopes to marry?
6. Zeke believes that his mother regards him as “broken beyond fixing.” Is this really how Gwen sees him? To what extent does her behavior exacerbate his difficulties? What is the nature of Zeke's disorder? Does the novel suggest that his difficulties also have their rewards?
7. Zeke is described as looking like a Raphael angel and Henry is referred to as beautiful. How do these two very different men relate to their appearance? What else do they have in common that attracts Verona to Zeke?



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8. What makes Zeke decide to tell his father about his mother's infidelity? Was this the right choice? What are Zeke's responsibilities towards his parents?
9. Jill and Zeke both feel out of place in America. Would they have become friends if they had met in London? What do they have in common besides being visitors to a foreign country?
10. Near the end of the novel Verona tells Zeke about a princess who is immune to gravity except when she swims in the palace lake. What does Verona hope to suggest by telling this story?
11. What does the title *Banishing Verona* refer to? What does Zeke mean at the end of the novel when he says that he'll 'try'? Is there a future for Zeke and Verona?