

READING GROUP GUIDE

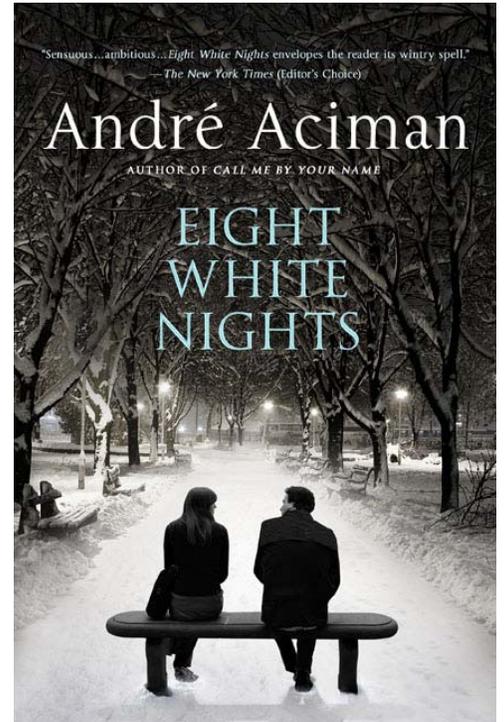
Eight White Nights

A Novel

by **André Aciman**

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About this Guide

The following author biography and list of questions about *Eight White Nights* 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 *Eight White Nights*.

About the Book

A young man goes to a Christmas party in upper Manhattan where a woman introduces herself with three simple words: “I am Clara.” Over the following seven days, they meet every evening at the cinema. Overwhelmed yet cautious, he treads softly. The tension between them builds gradually—marked by ambivalence, hope, and distrust—culminating in a final scene on New Year’s Eve in a final scene charged with magic and the passion. André Aciman yet again explores human emotion with uncompromising accuracy in this piercing new novel. *Eight White Nights* is a brilliant performance from a master prose stylist.

About the Author

ANDRÉ ACIMAN is the author of *Call Me by Your Name*, *Out of Egypt*, and *False Papers*, and is the editor of *The Proust Project* (all published by FSG). He teaches comparative literature at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. He lives with his wife and family in Manhattan.

Discussion Questions

1. What role do language and speech play in the novel? What is the significance of the two characters' invented words and inside jokes (such as "otherpeoples", "amphibalence", and "trenches")?
2. Why does Aciman choose not to reveal the narrator's real name, or his occupation? Why does this make the repeated use of the phrase "I am Clara" in the first night so meaningful?
3. Why do you think Aciman chose to set a novel about Jewish characters at Christmastime? Is there any significance to Clara's name? Why eight nights?
4. How reliable is the narrator, or "Printz Oskar", at pinpointing Clara's emotions and intentions? Do you feel like you are able to understand her character, or does she remain enigmatic?
5. What does a "door number 3 question" mean? Do the characters use this phrase to avoid honesty and/or intimacy?
6. How did you feel about the narrator when he described his older lover with whom he fell out of love and left, and then discovered she had died? Did you sympathize with him, or feel angry at his indifference?
7. Why is Printz so fixated on Inky throughout the story? Why does Clara take him to meet Inky's grandparents?
8. What roles do music and film play in the characters' developing relationship? Would their relationship have been possible without the influence of Rohmer and classical music?
9. On the fifth night, what really happens between the two characters that causes the riff? Is Clara right to be wary of Printz and his intentions? Is Printz really afraid of disappointment – or something else?
10. The narrator places great importance on every word, gesture, and thought from himself and Clara, as if every moment brings them either much closer or further apart. What makes their courtship so precarious? Is their tangled dance necessary to bring them together, or does it just complicate and prolong the inevitable?

11. What does the revelation at the end about Printz's mother's unhappy marriage to his father mean to Printz?
12. Whose is the voice telling Printz to "go back" at the end and not enter the party? Will he finally be able to ignore it?

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