



The Favor

BOOK CLUB GUIDE



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Introduction

The Favor tells the story of Nora Hammond, a woman who by day works at a vintage clothes store, I'll Have Seconds, in New York City.

At home, Nora is dealing with harder things—a mountain of unpaid debt due to fertility treatments, while she and her husband Jacob are no closer to having a family. Their last embryo is frozen, as the couple decides on next steps.

One day, Evelyn Elliot, an extroverted socialite, walks into the shop. Evelyn is bursting with fun—and money—and she immediately bonds with Nora when she buys out the shop. Soon Nora is living her best life running around with Evelyn, while also trying to figure out the right way into an authentic friendship:

“Obviously, nobody would call Evelyn out for being spoiled. But shouldn't somebody let her know what might be perceived as out of touch? Wasn't that the job of a friend?”

This “job of a friend” gets more complicated when Evelyn offers to carry a baby for Nora—she and Jacob have been holding only one last frozen embryo, knowing that Nora has had no luck carrying it—and this favor then sets a very complicated roller coaster into motion.

About the Author

Adele Griffin is a New Yorker who enjoys living in Los Angeles even if never snows here. She is the author of many books for new and young people. *The Favor* is her first book for older people. She loves pull-quotes, bakery cakes, and writing about herself in third person. Find her on Instagram at @adelegriffin or adelegriffin.com for big surprises (okay, no surprises, but that's where you can find more bio and the book list).



CREDIT: ANDREAS NEUMANN

Did you know that you can invite Adele to talk to your book club? Virtual book club visits are free, as long as your club is reading *The Favor* and has 5+ members.

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Discussion Questions

1. Describe Nora and Evelyn's first meeting. How do those first impressions shape the dynamic of their friendship?
2. How does Nora's love of vintage clothing shape her outlook on life?
3. Why does Jacob feel threatened by Evelyn? How does he handle his feelings? What effect does his discomfort have on Nora?
4. When asking her for styling, do Evelyn's references to Nora's savings feel empathetic or manipulative?
5. What role does Nora's mother play throughout the book? How do her dreams influence Nora's life?
6. How does Evelyn handle rejection? Why do you think she behaves that way?
7. Evelyn is happy to use the pregnancy to boost her standing on social media. How did you feel about EvvieDoesIt? Would you have pushed back if you were in Nora's shoes?
8. Nora is superstitious about believing anything positive about the pregnancy. How does superstition protect us from bad news?
9. How does Nora's attempt to be tactful by discussing the Bergessen cape in person backfire? Can you remember a time when waiting for "the right moment" to discuss a problem made it worse in the long run?
10. Where does Nora and Evelyn's friendship stand at the end of the book? What do you think is next for them?
11. Do you think selling the cape to Bryce was the right call? How would you have handled it?
12. Do you agree with Jacob's initial feelings about Evelyn? What makes him come around?
13. Why do you think Evelyn wanted to start EvvieDoesIt? How do you think she feels about herself?
14. How do you think Nora's opinion of Evelyn shifts throughout the book? What drives those shifts?



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Author Q&A

What was the inspiration for *The Favor*?

My children were both born via surrogacy, and I'm fortunate that my personal experiences were so positive. But I remember the push and pull of that time, of being deeply emotionally invested while physically so disconnected. My surrogates were literally my lifeline. But what if it had been a different experience? What if my surrogate never kept me in the loop? What if I wasn't even a priority? Those were some of the questions that kicked off my early outline.

What's the first thing you decide on when you start writing a new book?

First, I buy a 5x7 lined notebook. For the next weeks, I'm writing down everything I sense about this maybe-novel. I gather scraps—names, scenes, settings, a feel for the trajectory—all in my scribbly longhand. Also, I try not to blurt out my idea to everyone, but I always do.

There are so many great details about the world of vintage styling throughout the book. How did you connect with that world? What was your research like?

Many of us who love wearing vintage fashion connect with the sense that we inhabit other stories and a shared life—I've got a closet full of other people's histories. So research was a delight. Rapt hours steeped in online vintage sites? Yes, please. I'm also a big fan of memoirs and documentaries about designers. Writing about fashion was a happy, natural burrow down well-known rabbit holes.

Evelyn and Nora are back in contact by the end of the book, but they're nowhere near as close. Do you think this is the beginning of finding each other again, or will they remain friends only distantly?

I'd like to think that both answers are true. I think in the evolution of this friendship, Nora and Evelyn come to a hard-won, genuine understanding of each other. At the same time, they're more respectful and honest about the boundaries of this relationship. They've found their balance.

Spoiler Alert! Nora's cape switch is a big surprise. When did you decide that she should keep the original?

I'd hoped to give Nora the last laugh, and I'm drawn to writing about privilege bubbles—people wanting things for the sake of wanting them, people who get their way and say. Nora's switch makes me happy because she knows precisely why she values this piece. It's a feisty move but no out of character—and I'm always cheering for Nora.



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Guiding Questions

I am so thrilled you've invited me to speak with your book club about *The Favor*. I like to think *The Favor* is a careful path into the bigger conversation about infertility, but it's also the story of my first big love—New York—as well as the intrigue of vintage, the thrill of new relationships, the deep value of long relationships, and the many unconventional paths to motherhood. Here are some questions I would be happy to answer to help frame our discussion, but don't feel bound by them—ask me anything.

1. Can you talk a little more about the inspiration behind *The Favor*?
2. How long did it take you to write *The Favor*?
3. We learn early on that Nora and her husband, Jacob, have been trying to conceive a child for several years, and that it's been a big strain on their marriage. What made you decide to center the book in large part on fertility and how it can affect women's lives?
4. In many ways, this novel is about different kinds of families—we get to know Nora and Jacob and their dog as a small family, and then we meet their families of origin, along with Evelyn and her family, and then of course Nora's work family, including a gay man who becomes a father via surrogacy. Family is such a fertile ground for fiction—what was your own family like, and what aspects of your experience in family have you brought to your work?
5. As a few of Nora and Evelyn's acquaintances point out, the stories we hear most about surrogacy are horror stories of kidnapping and protracted lawsuits. Did those well-known fears change the way you wrote *The Favor*?
6. Can you talk about the differences between writing for young readers versus the readership you're hoping to reach with *The Favor*?
7. What do you hope readers will take away from *The Favor*?

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