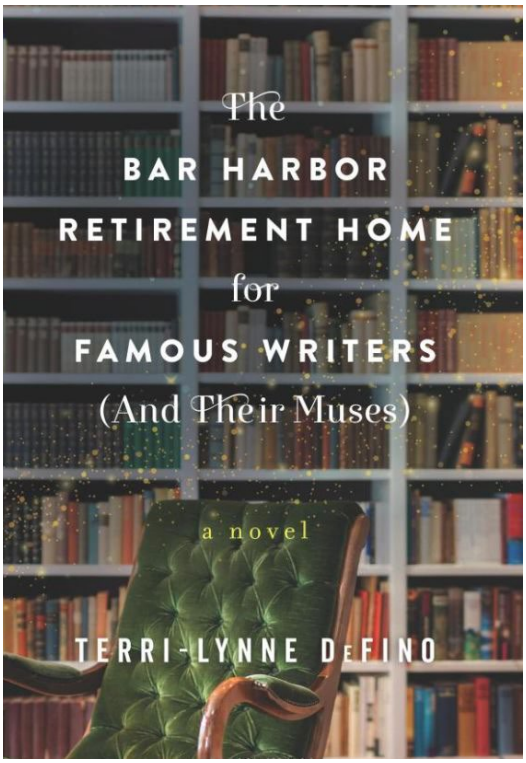
Martin County Library System Book Club Kit:

The Bar Harbor Retirement Home for Famous Writers (And Their Muses): A Novel by Terri-Lynne DeFino

Included in the Kit:

- Book summary
- Author biography
- Discussion questions
- Recipe suggestions



Book summary

A whimsical, moving novel about a retirement home for literary legends who spar, conjure up new stories, and almost magically change the lives of the people around them.

Alfonse Carducci was a literary giant who lived his life to excess—lovers, alcohol, parties, and literary rivalries. But now he's come to the Bar Harbor Home for the Elderly to spend the remainder of his days among kindred spirits: the publishing industry's nearly gone but never forgotten greats. Only now, at the end of his life, does he comprehend the price of appeasing every desire, and the consequences of forsaking love to pursue

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greatness. For Alfonse has an unshakeable case of writer's block that distresses him much more than his precarious health.

Set on the water in one of New England's most beautiful locales, the Bar Harbor Home was established specifically for elderly writers needing a place to live out their golden years—or final days—in understated luxury and surrounded by congenial literary company. A faithful staff of nurses and orderlies surround the writers, and are drawn into their orbit, as they are forced to reckon with their own life stories. Among them are Cecibel Bringer, a young woman who knows first-hand the cost of chasing excess. A terrible accident destroyed her face and her sister in a split-second decision that Cecibel can never forgive, though she has tried to forget. Living quietly as an orderly, refusing to risk again the cost of love, Cecibel never anticipated the impact of meeting her favorite writer, Alfonse Carducci—or the effect he would have on her existence. In Cecibel, Alfonse finds a muse who returns him to the passion he thought he lost. As the words flow from him, weaving a tale taken up by the other residents of the Pen, Cecibel is reawakened to the idea of love and forgiveness.

As the edges between story and reality blur, a world within a world is created. It’s a place where the old are made young, the damaged are made whole, and anything is possible….

Source: Harper Collins. (harpercollins.com/products/the-bar-harbor-retirement-home-for-famous-writers-and-their-muses-terri-lynne-defino)

The Bar Harbor Retirement Home for Famous Writers (And Their Muses)

by Terri-Lynne DeFino

Meet the Author



Terri-Lynne DeFino was born and raised in New Jersey but escaped to the wilds of Connecticut back in the nineties when her kids were babies and everyone wore flannel. She is the second of four children born to a homemaker and a then-fledgling attorney, in a Paterson, NJ household that included two grandparents and the occasional uncle, where Sunday dinner was a given and the noise level often required earplugs. According to her mother, she started writing stories at the age of seven, and learned to cook at any elbow she could wedge herself under. These days, her famiglia is larger, and louder, which might explain why she's still in Connecticut, but if you knock on her door, she'll invite you in and feed you, because you can take the Italian girl out of Jersey, but you can't take the Jersey Italian out of the girl.

Author's website. (modestyisforsuckers.com/about/)

The Bar Harbor Retirement Home for Famous Writers (And Their Muses)

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Discussion Questions

1. What do you think life in the Pen was like before Alfonse's arrival? What changed when Alfonse arrived?
2. Alfonse tells Cecibel that "love is not passion.... Love is sweet and good and righteous. Passion is wild and messy and dangerous." What is the driving force behind Alfonse's relationships with Olivia, Judith, Cornelius and Cecibel? Is it love or passion?
3. "If you go by what the critics and sales figures say, my greatest work was *And the Ladies Sang*. A good book. One I'm proud of, naturally. Nineteen eighty-four was a powerful time for women, and the book spoke to several generations fighting the good fight. But if you're asking which book rests most kindly in my heart, it's *Green Apples for Stewart*." On the strength of this, what do you think Olivia's greatest works were about?
4. Throughout the novel, Cecibel uses her hair to conceal her scarring and to maintain a sense of "vanity she no longer had a right to." Does Cecibel hide her scars purely for her own vanity, or does she have other reasons for hiding her scars?
5. Cecibel serves as the muse behind Aldo and Cecilia's story. In what ways does Cecibel inspire the characters in Alfonse, Olivia and Switch's story? What are the parallels between Cecibel and Cecilia?
6. Cecibel thinks of herself as a monster. Is Cecibel a monster? What makes her view herself this way?
7. Finlay was sent to prison for murdering his local teacher after enduring years of abuse. Do you think Finlay deserved to go to prison for his actions? How do the other characters in the novel view Finlay in light of his crime?
8. Discuss whether Cecibel is an employee or a resident of the Pen. Are the other staff members simply employees, or are they residents?
9. "[Cornelius] and I dreamed up this place when we were young men conquering the literary world. We took it from the greats. Faulkner, Joyce, Cather, Parker. We robbed them blind and flew their tattered flags in their

faces." Do you think the Bar Harbor Home for the Elderly lived up to Cornelius and Alfonse's expectations?

10. What do you think happens to the characters in the years following the novel's end?

Source: The Bar Harbor Retirement Home for Famous Writers (And Their Muses) appendix

The Bar Harbor Retirement Home for Famous Writers (And Their Muses)

by Terri-Lynne DeFino

Recipes

Smoked Fish Pâte



- 4-6 ounces smoked fish fillet (salmon, trout or bluefish)
- 3 ounces cream cheese, at room temperature
- 1 1⁄2 tablespoons mayonnaise (more or less to your liking - we like more)
- 1⁄4 cup finely chopped celery
- 1⁄4 cup chopped fresh parsley
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped red onions
- 1 dash hot pepper sauce (Cholula, Franks etc. use more to taste)
- salt
- fresh ground black pepper
- capers (optional to garnish)

Remove and discard any skin on the fish. Place the fish in a medium sized bowl and flake it with a fork. Add the cream cheese and 1 tablespoon of the mayo and stir until well blended, and the pate is a consistency of your liking (we like ours quite chunky -- almost requiring a spoon) adding more mayo or cream cheese as needed. Fold in celery, 1/4 cup of parsley and the onion. Add the lemon juice and hot pepper sauce and season with salt and pepper to taste.

Spoon into serving dish, cover and chill until serving time (at least 1-2 hours up to 48 hours).

Remove and garnish with additional parsley and capers if using.

Serve with crackers or toast points for a chunkier pate.

Source: Food. (food.com/recipe/smoked-fish-pate-410717)

The Bar Harbor Retirement Home for Famous Writers (And Their Muses)

by Terri-Lynne DeFino

Blueberry Mojito Recipe



- 1/4 cup Fresh blueberries
- approximately 10 leaves of fresh mint
- 1 tbsp freshly squeezed lime juice
- 1/2 bottle of Old Soaker Blueberry Soda
- Ice cubes
- Lime wedges and mint leaves for garnish
- 1 oz of your favorite white rum (optional)

In a 12 oz cocktail glass, place blueberries and mint leaves. With the help of a muddler, muddle the blueberries and the mint. Add the lime juice. If you choose to make this an alcoholic drink, pour your chosen alcohol into each glass. Add plenty of crushed ice to each glass. Add the blueberry soda.

Give it a quick stir. Garnish with lime wedge and sprig of mint. Sever and enjoy!

Source: Wary Travelers (warytravelers.com/2018/08/31/blueberry-mojito-recipe)

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