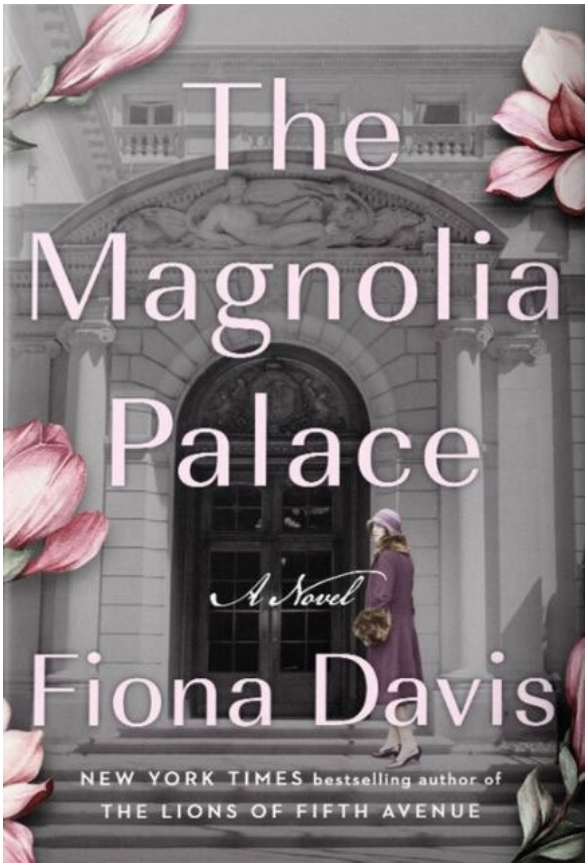
book discussion kits

The Magnolia Palace
by Fiona Davis

Martin County Library System Book Discussion Kit:

The Magnolia Palace by Fiona Davis

Included in the Kit:



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

Book summary

Eight months since losing her mother in the Spanish flu outbreak of 1919, twenty-one-year-old Lillian Carter's life has completely fallen apart. For the past six years, under the moniker Angelica, Lillian was one of the most sought-after artists' models in New York City, with statues based on her figure gracing landmarks from the Plaza Hotel to the Brooklyn Bridge. But with her mother gone, grieving Lillian is rudderless and desperate—the work has dried up and a looming scandal has left her entirely without a safe haven. So when she stumbles upon an employment opportunity at the Frick Mansion—a building that, ironically, bears her own visage—Lillian jumps at the chance. But the longer she works as a private secretary to the imperious and demanding Helen Frick, the daughter and heiress of industrialist and art patron

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Henry Clay Frick, the more deeply her life gets intertwined with that of the family—pulling her into a tangled web of romantic trysts, stolen jewels, and family drama that runs so deep, the stakes just may be life or death.

Nearly fifty years later, mod English model Veronica Weber has her own chance to make her career—and with it, earn the money she needs to support her family back home—within the walls of the former Frick residence, now converted into one of New York City's most impressive museums. But when she—along with a charming intern/budding art curator named Joshua—is dismissed from the Vogue shoot taking place at the Frick Collection, she chances upon a series of hidden messages in the museum: messages that will lead her and Joshua on a hunt that could not only solve Veronica's financial woes, but could finally reveal the truth behind a decades-old murder in the infamous Frick family.

Source: Author's website. (fionadavisbooks.com/the-magnolia-palace)

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Meet the Author



Fiona Davis is the New York Times bestselling author of six historical fiction novels set in iconic New York City buildings, including *The Magnolia Palace*, *The Dollhouse*, *The Address*, and *The Lions of Fifth Avenue*, which was a Good Morning America book club pick. Her novels have been chosen as "One Book, One Community" reads and her articles have appeared in publications like *The Wall Street Journal* and *O the Oprah Magazine*.

She first came to New York as an actress but fell in love with writing after getting a master's degree at Columbia Journalism School. Her books have been translated into over twenty languages and she's based in New York City.

Source: Author's website.
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Discussion Questions

1. If you could meet any of these characters and have a conversation with them, who would it be? What would your conversation be about?
2. When Miss Helen meets Lillian, she says, "I like to make things difficult for other people. You should know that right off: I am known to be difficult." How does their relationship evolve over the course of the book?
3. While trying to convince Lillian to pose for his statues, Mr. Konti says that if the people of New York "walk by one of my statues and look up and see something beautiful, an idea or person who inspires them, then I have done my job. I do this not for me. It's for humanity." What do you think of this statement? Does it resonate with you and the role public art plays in your life? Why or Why not?
4. Miss Helen seems disconnected from reality, and is frequently oblivious to the feelings and motives of those around her. Why do you think that is? How do you think her wealth and position have altered her worldview? How did it affect the way she treated people like Lillian, or the way her father regarded people like Bertha?
5. How do Joshua's experiences as a Black man in the art world affect the way he views that art at the Frick? Do his experiences alter your views of art history in any way?
6. How do Lillian's and Veronica's experiences working as models in two different decades compare? In what ways does the novel explore the difference between being looked at versus being seen?
7. The tenuous friendship Joshua and Veronica build during their stay in the Frick Collection is almost destroyed when Veronica betrays his trust. What are the stakes for each of them in that moment? What makes Veronica's actions dangerous for both and how do their situations differ? What would you have encouraged Veronica to do with her find?

Source: Author's website. (fionadavisbooks.com/the-magnolia-palace)

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Recipes

Best Scones Recipe

For the Scones

- 2 cups (250 grams) all-purpose flour spooned and leveled
- 1/3 cup (65 grams) granulated sugar
- 1 Tablespoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 6 Tablespoons (85 grams) cold unsalted butter cubed into pieces
- 1/2 cup (120 ml) heavy whipping cream plus more for brushing the tops
- 1 large egg
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

For the vanilla glaze

- 1 cup (120 grams) powdered sugar
- 1-2 Tablespoons (15-30 ml) milk
- 1/2 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F (204 degrees C). Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper or a silicone baking mat and set aside.

In a large mixing bowl, whisk together the flour, granulated sugar, baking powder, and salt. Add the cold cubed butter and use a pastry cutter or fork to cut it into the dry ingredients until you have small pea-sized crumbs. (See below for flavor variations instructions).

In a separate mixing bowl, whisk together the heavy whipping cream, egg and vanilla extract until fully combined. Add the wet ingredients to the dry ingredients and stir until just combined. The mixture may be a little crumbly at this point, this is okay! Scoop the mixture out onto a lightly floured surface and work it together in a ball, then flatten into a 7- inch circle. Cut the dough into 8 equal-sized pieces and place them on the prepared baking sheet, making sure to leave a little room between each one.

Place the baking sheet in the freezer for 5-10 minutes or until the scones are chilled. Brush the tops of each scone with a little heavy whipping cream. If you're not adding a glaze (see below) you can top them with coarse sugar if desired. Bake at 400 degrees F (204 degrees C) for 18-22 minutes or until the tops of the scones are lightly browned and cooked through. Remove from the oven and allow to cool completely.

In a medium-sized mixing bowl, whisk together the powdered sugar, milk and vanilla extract until well combined. If the glaze is too thick add more milk to thin it out and if the glaze is too thin add more powdered sugar to thicken it. Top the scones with the glaze and allow to harden for 10-15 minutes, then serve, and enjoy.

- Source: "The Best Scones Recipe." Live Well Bake Often. (livewellbakeoften.com/scone-recipe)