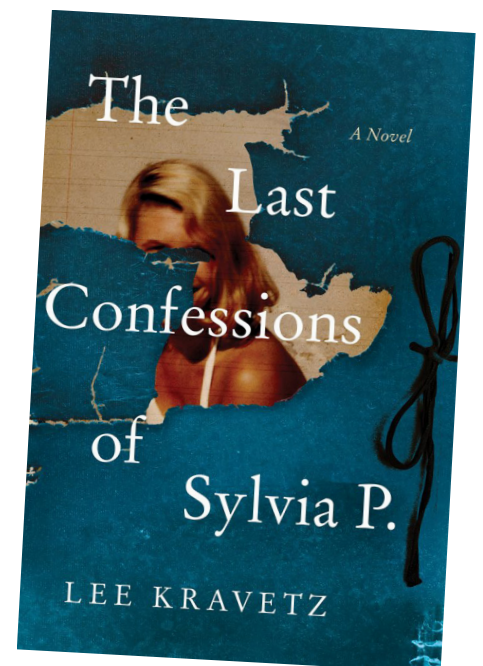


## DISCUSSION GUIDE

### *The Last Confessions of Sylvia P.*

- Sylvia Plath is one of the most celebrated writers of all time. What did you know about her personal history before you read *The Last Confessions of Sylvia P.*? Did the book challenge any of your preconceived notions about her life? What did you look up to learn more about after you finished reading?
- All three narrators are women, all trailblazers for their time. How were they treated and viewed by the men (husbands, fathers, and bosses) in their lives?
- Which of the three narrators in the story do you relate to or enjoy most? Why?
- Do you sympathize at all with Boston Rhodes? Why or why not?
- Compare and contrast the mental health issues of Boston and Sylvia.
- What are the differences in how Boston and Sylvia see themselves and each other?
- Professor Lowell stated, “We write poetry within an asylum from reason.” What did he mean by this? How does this premise present itself throughout the novel?
- According to Boston, “We all have a little bit of madness in us.” Discuss the perception of poets as mad.
- Sylvia says she feels too much: “My heart is just too big. It lets in too much. I can’t help but feel everything. It’s overwhelming. So I put the feelings into poems. I like to think of each poem as a little room I drop into for short visits.” Discuss the notion of poetry as therapy. Is there an activity that works as therapy for you?
- Discuss the concept of freedom as it relates to Sylvia and Dr. Barnhouse. Do you think their struggles were unique to the time period? Are they still applicable today?
- Dr. Barnhouse was the only female psychiatrist in New England. How did this inform her treatment methods?



Continued →

## DISCUSSION GUIDE

### *The Last Confessions of Sylvia P.*

- Sylvia frequently points out similarities between herself and Dr. Barnhouse. Do you think they are similar? Why or why not?
- Nicolas says the manuscript is better off rotting in the attic than a private vault. What do you think should become of historical artifacts like this? Should people be able to own them for their own private collections? Or should they be in museums or otherwise publicly accessible?
- How did you feel about Estee's decision to destroy the manuscript? Did you expect it? What would you have done?
- Sylvia Plath left an enormous mark on the literary community. Do you think her suicide had an effect on her success? If so, what was it? How would you characterize her personal and professional legacies?

Eager to keep *The Last Confessions of Sylvia P.* discussion going? Check out our exclusive Author Q&A with Lee Kravetz, plus a Companion Guide and Recommended Next Reads, available at [theclub.hoopladigital.com](http://theclub.hoopladigital.com).

