

"A beautiful story of love and redemption."

KRISTIN HANNAH, #1 *New York Times* bestselling author

BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *THE KOMMANDANT'S GIRL*

PAM JENOFF

The
LAST SUMMER
at CHELSEA BEACH



A NOVEL

❧ BOOK CLUB KIT ❧



Inside the kit: discover additional material from Pam Jenoff to help make your book club a success!

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A LETTER TO BOOK CLUBS

Dear Book Club Friends:

True confession: I have never been in a book club.

It is one of the few regrets of my life. Whether because of time or not finding the right group, I have never actually been a book club member. (Perhaps the closest I've come is being part of a writers' workshop.) And yet I have visited with hundreds of book clubs over the years, from my own mom's book club, to a book club comprised of my elementary school teachers, to book clubs thousands of miles away by Skype. So I have been privileged to share wine (real or virtual) and great conversation with book club readers from ages 18 to 80 across the United States and beyond.

These visits have given me cause to wonder over the years: what makes a great book-club pick? A story with complex questions and moral dilemmas? Strong female characters with whom readers will identify? Friendships and romances that will break our hearts? Or a tale that educates as it entertains?

I'm so excited to share with you *The Last Summer at Chelsea Beach* because I believe it brings book clubs all of these elements and more. You and your fellow book-club members will identify with remarkable Adelia Montforte and her brave attempt to forge a new life in America. You will swoon with her first love and cry when her heart is broken. But you will also question and debate her choices and secrets, and those of others, like her star-crossed lover, Charlie Connally. You will ask: what would I do if everything was taken from me? And you will do all of this while gaining insight into a unique part of the American home front during the war.

The Last Summer at Chelsea Beach, perhaps more so than any of my previous titles, is a quintessential book-club read. It weaves together timeless themes of love, heartbreak, tragedy, sacrifice and redemption. It is both a summer romance and a war story, and while entertaining it illuminates life on the home front in a way that has not been done before. It is both global and personal. (And it makes for a fabulous 1940s-themed book-club party—see ideas below. Dress the part and send me photos!)

I realize that book-club choices are carefully considered and not easily made, and it is an honor every time one of my books is selected. I hope that your book club will read, laugh, cry and debate *The Last Summer at Chelsea Beach*—and perhaps even invite me—I am always happy to Skype or phone in to your book club!

All my best,

Pam Jenoff

PLANNING YOUR BOOK CLUB PARTY

The Last Summer at Chelsea Beach is not just a book-club pick—it's an excuse for a fabulous 1940s-themed party! Here are some suggestions to help make it special:

The Playlist

The following are some musical suggestions to set the mood. (Bear in mind that while some of these songs predate the 1940s, all were popular during the World War II era.)

- “I’ll Be Seeing You” by Billie Holiday
- “Where or When” by Peggy Lee & Benny Goodman
- “Pennies from Heaven” by Bing Crosby
- “The Way You Look Tonight” by Bing Crosby & Dixie Lee Crosby
- “I’ll Be Home for Christmas” by Bing Crosby
- “As Time Goes By” by Dooley Wilson (from the film *Casablanca*)
- “We’ll Meet Again” by Vera Lynn
- “In the Mood” by Glenn Miller
- “Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy of Company B” by The Andrews Sisters
- “Don’t Sit Under the Apple Tree” by The Andrews Sisters
- “I Had the Craziest Dream” by Harry James
- “People Will Say We’re In Love” by Richard Rodgers & Oscar Hammerstein (from the musical *Oklahoma!*)

PLANNING YOUR BOOK CLUB PARTY

The Drinks

Add a splash to your book club party with these cocktails, all of which were popular during the 1940s.

The Mary Pickford

2 ounces Gold Label rum
1 ounce fresh pineapple juice
A dash of grenadine
A dash of maraschino

Shake the ingredients with cracked ice
and strain.

Alexander II

1 ounce brandy
1 ounce heavy sweet cream
 $\frac{3}{4}$ ounce crème de cacao

Shake the ingredients with cracked ice
and strain.

Gin Fizz

2 ounces gin
 $\frac{1}{2}$ ounce lemon juice
1 teaspoon powdered sugar
3 to 4 ounces club soda

Shake gin, lemon juice and powdered
sugar with cracked ice. Strain into a glass
filled with ice. Add club soda.

PLANNING YOUR BOOK CLUB PARTY

The Food

I have searched high and low for good World War II–era recipes. But with rationing, choices were grim and I have not found any that I can in good conscience recommend to you. (If you find any good ones, please let me know!) Instead, I recommend you try these authentic World War II–era desserts.

WWII Oatmeal Molasses Cookies

2 cups all-purpose flour
2 cups oatmeal
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon salt
1 cup sugar
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup shortening
2 eggs, beaten
5 tablespoons light molasses
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped walnuts
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup raisins

Preheat oven to 350°F. In a large bowl, stir together the flour, oatmeal, baking soda, baking powder and salt. In a separate large bowl, beat the sugar with the shortening until smooth and creamy; mix in beaten eggs, molasses and vanilla. Mix the dry ingredients in with the wet. Stir in walnuts and raisins. Drop spoonfuls onto ungreased baking sheets.

Bake for 10 to 12 minutes. Allow cookies to cool on baking sheet for 5 minutes before removing to a wire rack.

Victory Cake

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup shortening
2 tablespoons grated orange rind
1 cup white corn syrup
2 $\frac{1}{4}$ cups sifted cake flour
2 $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoons baking powder
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt
3 eggs
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup milk
1 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons lemon extract

Preheat oven to 350°F. Cream shortening and orange rind. Beat in syrup, blending for one minute. Add $\frac{1}{4}$ of dry ingredients. Beat in eggs one at a time. Add the remaining dry ingredients, milk and lemon extract.

Bake in two eight-inch cake pans for 30 minutes. Frost with lemon frosting when cool.

IN CONVERSATION WITH PAM JENOFF

What was the inspiration behind *The Last Summer at Chelsea Beach*?

Some twenty years ago, I conceived of a story in which a girl who is an only child becomes close to a family with four sons—kind of a reverse *Little Women*. I began working on the manuscript but life and other projects intervened. A few years ago, when I returned to the story, I realized that it needed to be set against the backdrop of World War II and that the families should be from different religious and ethnic backgrounds. This provided not only fertile ground for the love story itself, but for exploring many of the cultural aspects of the era.

What kind of research did you do for this book? What are the challenges of writing historical novels?

One thing that was so fun about this book is that the research was more personal. My dad's side of the family is from Atlantic City and owned small hotels and restaurants there in the 1930s and 40s; I summered there as a girl and it is very much in my blood. It was so much fun to drive around the shore and visualize what it would have looked like. I also had a grand time in the archives of the Atlantic City Library, looking at old photos and postcards and news clippings to learn what life was like during the war. How, for example, did they black out the Boardwalk lights? Another setting of the book, South Philadelphia, is where my mom grew up and I loved having her proof the manuscript and serve as my expert.

One of the biggest challenges in writing historical fiction is how to remain true to the period while still bending it to the needs of the narrative. Figuring out how much historical detail to include is also complex. I am a historian by training (I received my master's degree in history from Cambridge) and I can get completely lost in the research. But you have to include it in a way that is intrinsic to the story. For this book, the particular challenge was to get the details of that exact moment of time right. For example, I could find lots of people able to tell me about Chelsea in the 1950s but not so much before then. And I was very nervous about getting the details rights!

Most of your novels are set in Europe. What made you decide to set *The Last Summer at Chelsea Beach* stateside? And why Atlantic City, New Jersey, of all places?

Most of my novels to date have been set during the Second World War. My inspiration derives largely from my years at the Pentagon and my time as a diplomat for the State Department in Europe spent working on Holocaust issues. I knew I wanted to turn to the home front and explore what happened there, how the war affected people's lives. One of the great ironies is that while I have written all my World War II historical while living in the States, I actually began the manuscript for *The Last Summer at Chelsea Beach* while living in Poland two decades ago.

Even before I realized it would be set during the war, I always knew *The Last Summer at Chelsea Beach* was a story set in part by the sea. Addie's fear of the water and her relationship to the coast mirrors so much of what she faced emotionally, and the setting is so evocative for young love. I

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chose Atlantic City because the city was at the heart of the home front: they set up a massive training facility there nicknamed Camp Boardwalk, and there were soldiers by the thousands. The way everyday life there was changed was really a microcosm of the home front across America.

All of your novels take place during World War II. What is it about this period that appeals to you?

I was profoundly moved and changed by my years in Europe working on Holocaust issues, and I call my books love songs to the people and the era. It is an honor and a privilege to capture stories from this time and bring the period to life for both longtime readers of the period and those encountering it for the first time.

Additionally, as a novelist my goal is to take the reader and put her in the shoes of my protagonist and have her ask, “What would I have done?” The war era, with its dire circumstances and stark choices, is ideal for doing just that.

Writing and promoting books is a full-time job, but you also have a family and young children. How do you find the time to write, and what are your tricks for achieving balance between your work and personal life?

It is true that, in addition to the writing, I have three small children and a job as a law school professor. I joke that I do too many things and none of them well. But more apt is a quote from Anne Lamott: “I used to not be able to write if there was a dish in the sink. Then I had a child, and now I can write if there’s a corpse in the sink.” You have to be really disciplined and make the time for writing. For example, I started a 100-day challenge on January 2 where I committed to write every single day for 100 days, and it went so well I am now on my second 100 days.

I don’t have a great secret for work-life balance. I love all the things I do—teaching, writing, kids—and doing them makes me a happier and more fulfilled person. So, just like everyone else, I juggle!

SUGGESTED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The sense of place plays a very important role in *The Last Summer at Chelsea Beach*. Which setting did you find the most evocative?
2. Siblings often fall into distinct roles within a family. Did the relationships between the Connally brothers remind you of your own siblings or of families you've known?
3. Addie's choices altered her life drastically. Have you ever lamented a path that you might have taken but didn't?
4. It seems at some points in the book that Charlie and Addie are fated to be together, but at others they seem star-crossed. Do you believe in destiny and "meant to be," or is love a matter of free will?
5. Addie was rather an independent woman without many close female friendships. Why do you think that is? What was it that drew her and Claire Churchill together?
6. Did any details in the story differ from your perception of life on the home front during the Second World War? What surprised you?
7. What do you think it was that Addie really wanted out of life, and did she succeed in getting it? What did she have to sacrifice or compromise?
8. Which of the men in the book would you have chosen for Addie (if any of them)? What is it about Addie's upbringing and circumstances that influenced her romantic decisions?



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PRAISE FOR *THE LAST SUMMER AT CHELSEA BEACH*

“A **beautiful** story of love and redemption.”
—Kristin Hannah, #1 *New York Times* bestselling author



“A **powerful**, moving drama of love, loss and redemption—
heartbreaking, **authentic** and ultimately **uplifting**.”
—Susan Wiggs, #1 *New York Times* bestselling author



“**Heartfelt, stirring...** *The Last Summer at Chelsea Beach*
is definitely one for my keeper shelf.”
—Karen White, *New York Times* bestselling author



“I won’t soon forget Adelia Montforte...
A **warm** and **heartfelt** story of emotional survival.”
—Diane Chamberlain, international bestselling author



“**Absorbs** you from the beginning and **doesn’t let go**.”
—Beatriz Williams, *New York Times* bestselling author



“**Powerfully** and **emotionally written**, this novel of love and war,
tragedy and salvation pulls readers deep into Jenoff’s story.”
—*RT Book Reviews*



PAM JENOFF

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Photo Credit: Dominic Episcopo

PAM JENOFF

is the author of several novels, including the international bestseller *The Kommandant's Girl*, which also earned her a Quill Award nomination. Along with a bachelor's degree in international affairs from George Washington University and a master's degree in history from Cambridge, she received her Juris Doctor from the University of Pennsylvania. She's served as a Foreign Service Officer for the US State Department in Europe as the special assistant to the Secretary of the Army at the Pentagon and as a practicing attorney. Pam lives with her husband and three children near Philadelphia where, in addition to writing, she teaches law school.

Visit www.PamJenoff.com to learn more.