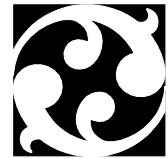




# CAMELOT BOOK CLUB



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## ***OLIVE KITTERIDGE***

by Elizabeth Strout

*Olive Kitteridge* is a “novel” of short stories that tell of small-town Maine residents who all struggle with relationships and the quest to feel known. Each story could stand alone, but the book doesn’t read like a collection of separate works, but rather as a description of people of a common place who all know a common character (Olive), and who all struggle with the fundamental problem of the author’s theme, trying not to feel completely alone.

Olive shows up in each of the stories, sometimes as a minor character who somebody in the story knows, and sometimes as the major character. The stories are the author’s interesting way of weaving together different aspects of Olive’s life; her grumpy approach to life, her sensitivity in dealing with people in need of intimacy and the interesting complexity of her character.

The book deals with issues such as anorexia, divorce, aging, disaster, marriage, family, and love. It was the Pulitzer Prize Winner for Fiction in 2009.

(Your Scribe’s note: Some of the above synopsis is adapted from online readers’ comments.)

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### CAMELOT’s DISCUSSION of the book

Our hostess gave a brief description of the origin of the Pulitzer Prize, since this book received the award in 2009. There are several pre-determined categories, the Prize for fiction being one of them.

Everyone had a favorite among the stories, each so different from the others. One of the quotes we enjoyed was from *The Piano Player*. Angie O’Meara had never taken piano lessons, but explained her talent with “My hands are hungry.”

And in *Security*, Olive’s son Christopher talked to Olive about his difficult stepson – “Theodore has always been a little piece of crap.” --We were moved by the way Olive called Henry in the nursing home to tell him that his son was okay. --We laughed about the upstairs Christian tenant who had a parrot who spoke a religious phrase whenever it heard an off-color word. “Oh, hell’s bells” from Olive would elicit a loud “Praise God” from the parrot above.

There were so many favorite parts of the book that your Scribe was hard-pressed to record them all. All but one of us loved the book, and agreed that it was one of those books that stays with you. Olive was a complex person, grumpy yet compassionate, very insightful about other people’s feelings. We could all understand that the experiences of her life made her to be what she was – very real – and most of us liked her “in spite of herself”. We have hope, friends, life experiences, good and bad, and sometimes are “adrift in a sea of terror.” That’s life.

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**NEXT MEETING**

**When?** Friday, June 18, 2010, 1:30p.m.

**Where?** At Gwen Nelsons' house

**Why?** To have fun, and to discuss

*Spoken from the Heart*

by Laura Bush

Laura Bush's memoir of a private life that became public

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**MEETING NOTES**

We started our meeting with a short description from each of us about recent events in our lives. **Gwen** told us about the beautiful wedding of her granddaughter Samantha which took place in Samantha's back yard, and of all the many celebrations that took place before and after. She promised to bring photos when she gets them. **Barbara** brought pictures of her beloved twin granddaughters, now five years old. **Margaret** described the acupuncture process that Gene has undergone to try to alleviate his leg pain. Didn't help and there's no solution yet. **Karen** talked about her interesting recent trips to Argentina and to Colorado. **Anne Simms** described a fun time she had when she went to a classroom where she had taught, and where former students now graduating from high-school came to reunite with their classmates and teachers. Her school holds this event every year, and one of the students who showed up was a boy Anne had taught years ago. She reminded him that when she had told him 'way back then that some day he might come to a get-together like this in the future, he had said, "O, Mrs. Simms, you'll probably be dead by then."

We talked about the funny-looking ducks with orange beaks and orange legs some of us had seen, usually on top of a boat-house; and the snakes that seem more numerous this year.

Anne served coffee and a special raspberry pie that we all thought was scrumptious. Then, when the meeting was almost over, we heard three thumps from below and had a good laugh. Mike was in the basement again, waiting to be let out -- his little joke. Once again, it was a truly enjoyable Camelot day, with every member present.

**A Chuckle for Your Day**

Nine-year-old Joey was asked by his mother what he had learned in Sunday School about Moses and the Red Sea. 'Well, Mom, our teacher told us how God sent Moses behind enemy lines on a rescue mission to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. When he got to the Red Sea, he had his army build a pontoon bridge and all the people walked across safely. Then he radioed headquarters for reinforcements. They sent bombers to blow up the bridge and all the Israelites were saved.'

'Now, Joey, is that really what your teacher taught you?' his mother asked.

'Well, no, Mom. But, if I told it the way the teacher did, you'd never believe it!'

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CAMELOT BOOK CLUB IS GREAT

