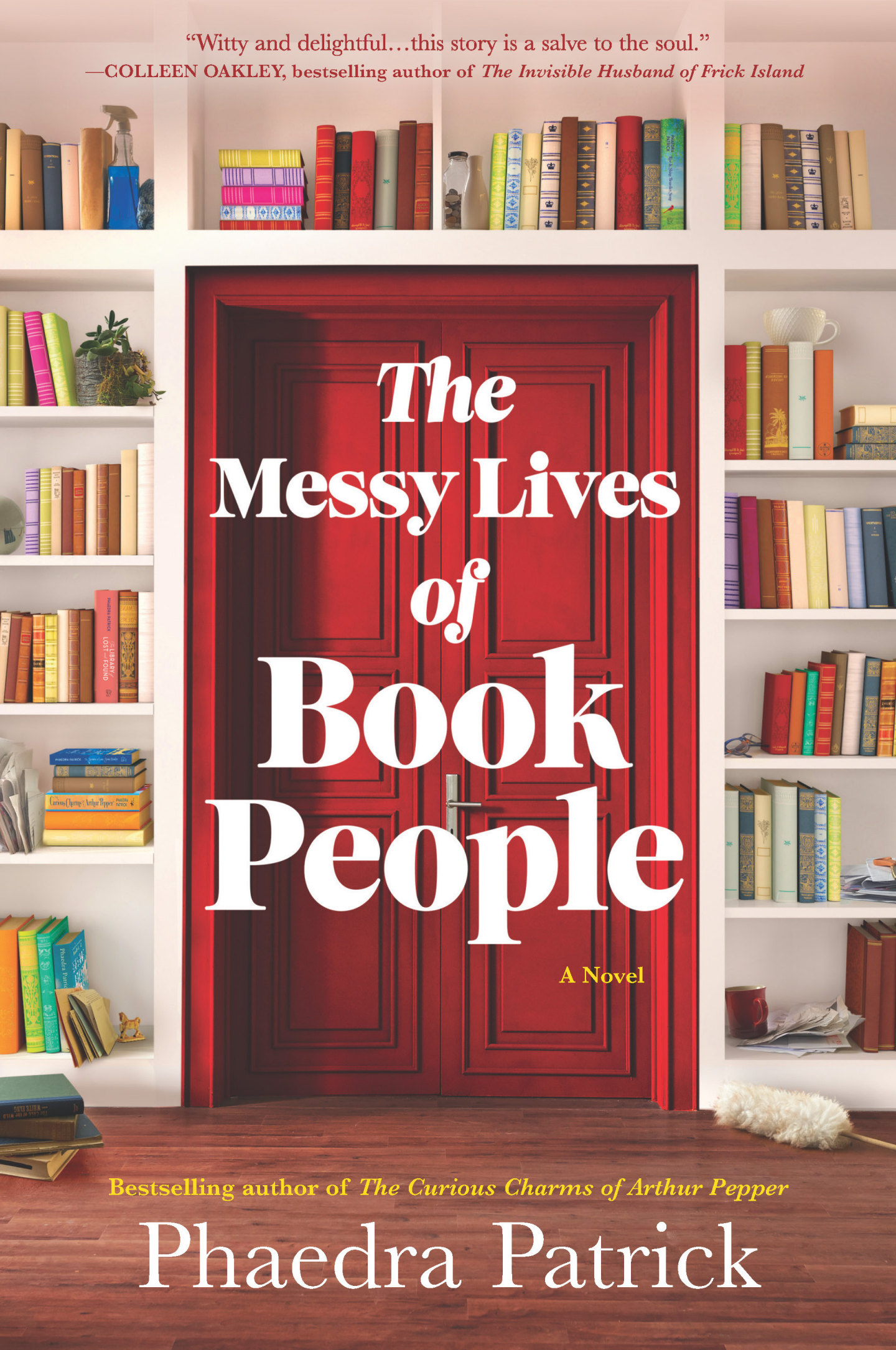


"Witty and delightful...this story is a salve to the soul."

—COLLEEN OAKLEY, bestselling author of *The Invisible Husband of Frick Island*



The Messy Lives of Book People

A Novel

Bestselling author of *The Curious Charms of Arthur Pepper*

Phaedra Patrick

Letter from the author

Dear Reader,

Thank you for choosing to read *The Messy Lives of Book People*. I love to write stories that touch the heart, raise a smile and offer plenty to discuss, so I hope you enjoy the novel.

This book, my fifth one, started with the spark of an idea—what if a reclusive bestselling author left a life-changing last wish for her cleaner to complete her last ever book? I was interested in exploring how the lives of two very different women, author Essie Starling and her housekeeper Liv Green, varied and intertwined.

Many of us daydream about stepping into someone else's shoes and *The Messy Lives of Book People* looks at what happens when this comes true and if dreams really live up to reality. Ultimately, Essie and Liv's story shows how books have the power to connect us all, no matter who we are or where we live.

Wishing you lots of happy reading!

Phaedra x

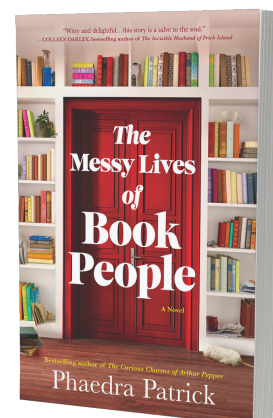


Discussion Questions

1. Liv Green and Essie Starling live very different lives. Liv is a busy cleaner, wife and mum of two, struggling to make ends meet. Essie lives a quiet, solitary life of luxury. Which woman did you relate to the most? Which woman's life would you prefer to lead and why?
2. Essie leaves Liv a very unusual last request and unexpected inheritance. Have you ever been left anything unexpected in a will?
3. Hannah Cardinal and the Platinum office staff don't always treat Liv with respect. Should Liv take some responsibility for this? Have you ever found yourself in a similar position at work, and did you stand up for yourself? If not, why not?
4. We learn of Essie's death early on in the book. How is her spirit kept alive on the page? What did you learn about her life and how did it change your opinion of her?
5. Liv steps into Essie's world and is seduced by her lifestyle. If you could step into someone else's shoes for six months, who would it be and why?
6. Liv has wanted to be a writer since childhood but was too embarrassed to share her dream with others. Did you have a childhood dream, and did you follow it? Did you tell others about it, or keep it to yourself?

Discussion Questions

7. Georgia Rory is an important character in Essie's fiction. How did Georgia influence and inspire change for Liv?
8. What was your favorite scene in the book and why? Did reading the book impact your mood? If yes, how so?
9. Liv and Jake endure various marriage struggles throughout the book making Liv question their future together. Ultimately, she decides she wants to make things work between them. Did you agree with her decision?
10. What do you think Liv will do next? What might her life look like in two years' time and beyond?



Reading List and Inspiration

The Messy Lives of Book People is a love letter to readers and writers everywhere, and I wanted to give my main characters, author Essie Starling and her housekeeper Liv Green, books to share to inspire their story. Here's a selection of the ones I've featured in my novel and why.

***Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll**

One of my favorite scenes in *The Messy Lives of Book People* is when Essie unexpectedly invites Liv to join her for afternoon tea. The champagne, tiny sandwiches and cakes are something Essie takes for granted, whereas they're a decadent treat for Liv. During the tea, I wanted Liv to impress and surprise Essie with her literary knowledge, and I thought *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* fit perfectly. It's a book both women might have read and enjoyed, regardless of their wildly different jobs. It was also one of my favorite books when I was growing up, and I see Essie as rather like the Red Queen, with a short temper and always wanting things her own way. Liv is more like Alice, practical, curious and creative. She's about to disappear down a rabbit hole into a different world as she tries to deliver Essie's last wish.

***Eleanor Oliphant Is Completely Fine* by Gail Honeyman**

This is a unique, contemporary story about an unconventional heroine trying to navigate the confusion and intricacies of life. I think this novel is exactly the kind of British bestseller that Essie would give to Liv to read. Essie and Liv both share some of Eleanor Oliphant's personality traits. Essie can be eccentric, awkward and judgmental, whereas Liv is honest, witty and full of resolve.

Reading List and Inspiration

The Georgia Rory book series by Essie Starling

My character Essie has written nineteen books featuring her popular heroine Georgia Rory, and she asks Liv to complete the twentieth one. Essie's books were inspired by a mix of Jack Reacher, Nancy Drew, The Famous Five and also the movie *Romancing the Stone*. I used to devour Nancy Drew and Enid Blyton books when I was growing up, and even though we only see snippets from the Georgia Rory novels in *The Messy Lives of Book People*, I wanted them to have the same kind of wholesome feel. Georgia is a traditional kind of heroine: smart, strong and brave. She's someone whom both Essie and Liv aspire to be, and I hope readers will love her, too.

The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo by Taylor Jenkins Reid

Taylor is one of my favorite writers. I think she's brilliant and I really look forward to her books coming out. *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo* (and also *Daisy Jones & The Six*) are novels I recommend to everyone. The title character Evelyn Hugo is a larger-than-life character seemingly based on the film stars of yesteryear, such as Joan Collins and Elizabeth Taylor. I think it must be difficult for some people to deal with that level of fame and Essie Starling is one of them. She's well known due to her bestselling books, but has shut herself away from society for a decade and Liv is one of her only bridges to the outside world. Essie and Liv admire and need each other in different ways, and while their relationship is tenuous, it's also very special to them both.

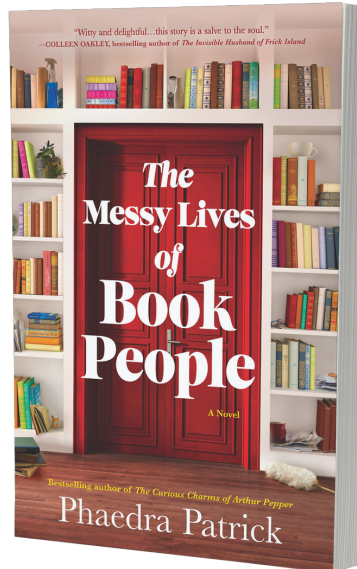
Reading List and Inspiration

***Garden Spells* by Sarah Addison Allen**

I've read this book several times, so I simply had to pop it into *The Messy Lives of Book People*. I originally popped *Garden Spells* because its cover (UK hardcover—black with shiny leaves and moths) was so beautiful, and I loved the premise. It's about two sisters who live in a small town in North Carolina where everyone has magical powers. Sarah Addison Allen writes with a lovely, warm touch and it's easy to believe her characters are real. In my writing, I also like to add a touch of make-believe, asking the reader to suspend their disbelief for a while and to go with the flow of the story. I've been to North Carolina a couple of times, and it was lovely to imagine the setting and townsfolk from *Garden Spells*. Out of all the states I've visited in the US (around fourteen in total), North Carolina is the most similar to Saddleworth, where I live in the northwest of England.

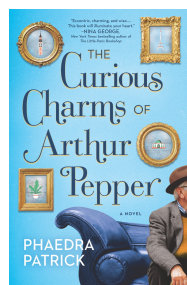
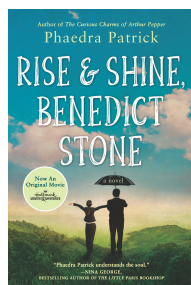
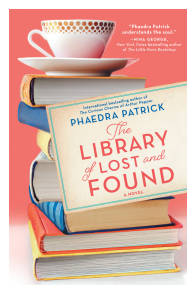
I hope you enjoy my inspiration list. There are several more books within my book to discover, and I hope you'll take pleasure in finding the references. Also, do take a close look at the front cover of *The Messy Lives of Book People*. Those of you with eagle eyes may have already spotted my previous books *The Curious Charms of Arthur Pepper*, *Rise and Shine*, *Benedict Stone*; *The Library of Lost and Found* and *The Secrets of Love Story Bridge* sitting on the shelves.

Happy reading!



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