

## Book Club Questions for *At the Stroke of Nine O'Clock*

In order to provide book clubs with thought-provoking questions, it is necessary to reveal important aspects of the plot. We suggest that you finish the book before you read on.

- What first drew you into the book? The blurb? The first sentence or paragraph? Why?
- Did the story grab your interest from the very beginning? What were the questions in your mind?
- Did the book take you outside your comfort zone? If so, how?
- Who was your favourite character/s and why?
- Were there any characters you loved to hate?
- Who is/are the hero(es) and why?
- Can it be said that there are villains in a story like this?
- Had you heard of Ruth Ellis before reading the novel? If so, what was your impression of her? Did that change as a result of reading the novel?
- Many people who lived through the 1950s can place exactly where they were at the moment Ellis was hanged. If you hadn't heard of her, or didn't live through the 1950s, have there been any news stories that you have followed to the same degree, desperate to know the outcome? Can you perhaps place yourself at the moment when you learned of a particular person's death? (JFK, Freddie Mercury, Lady Diana?)
- What do you think the author was trying to say about the legal justice system and about justice in general?
- Imagine how different your book club discussion would be if it were taking place in a country where the death penalty is still in use. Would you be persuaded that the penalty for murder should be either modified or abolished?
- Rather than write about Ruth Ellis, why might the author have decided to use three female characters, all of whose behaviours would have been frowned on by conventional society at the time, to explore some of the issues that she faced? How successful do you think this was?
- How did you feel about Davis's choice to use women from different classes to show how some sections of society are protected and some are allowed to fall by the wayside? Do you think class divisions are still as marked as they were, or has there been a blurring of boundaries?
- The book explores the various ways in which women were punished when they dared step outside the strict confines dictated by society. What do you think the most significant changes in women's lives have been since the 1950s?
- Which of the three main characters do you think would have had the greatest affinity with Ruth Ellis?
- Do you think that women are still judged on their appearances to the same degree?
- The book talks about double standards, the most obvious of which is between men and women. Which other double standards did you note were at play?
- What was the most significant revelation for you in the story and why?
- Are there any moments in the novel that have stayed with you?

- The results of a recent survey of UK readers confirm that readers prefer books that they learn something from. What, if anything, do you feel you learned from *At the Stroke of Nine O'Clock*?
- Which three words describe how you feel, having finished *At the Stroke of Nine O'Clock*?
- Were you satisfied with the book's ending? Did the novel leave any questions open-ended that you'd like to know the answer to?
- If you were a casting director for a film/TV version, who would you cast in the lead roles?
- What would you tweet (in 140 characters) about this book?
- Does the book remind you of any other novels you've read?
- If you had to halve the size of your book collection, would this book stay or go?
- If you could ask the author a question, what would it be?