

THE BODECIA BOOK CLUB REVIEW

Rebecca by Daphne du Maurier

Rebecca is a true classic English novel by Daphne du Maurier. A lot of modern day writers can learn from her writing the way she can write a twist into the story. She was born into a family of actors and authors and she has been described as a romantic novelist, although many of her books do tend to be sensational as not many of her books had happy endings. Her books tend to explore the more sinister side of love, which is dark and mysterious and forbidden. Du Maurier herself is a very interesting character, even becoming a Dame in 1969, she has had several autobiographies written about her, which we think will make for an excellent read.

The famous opening line of the book "*Last night I dreamt I went to Manderley again*" is an iconic image that sets the scene for the book. Manderley is based on du Maurier's house in Cornwall.

From that first line to the last "... and the ashes blew towards us with the salt wind from the sea" the narrator's name is never revealed. She is referred to as "my wife", Mrs. de Winter, "my dear", etc., but her first and last name are never revealed by the author. The one time she is introduced with a name is during a fancy dress ball, in which she dresses as a de Winter ancestor and is introduced as "Caroline de Winter", however this is evidently not her own name. Early in the novel she receives a letter and remarks that her name was correctly spelled, which is "an unusual thing", suggesting her name is strange, foreign or complex. Whilst courting her, Maxim compliments her on her "lovely and unusual name."

We wondered why the main character in the book was a nameless heroine? At the start of the book she is very timid and shy and full of low esteem and feels she is not worthy enough to live up to such a woman as Rebecca. It isn't until she realised what Rebecca was really like that she finds her own confidence and we love that she starts to stand up for herself and at the end of the day she really just likes being called Mrs de Winter! In one of du Maurier's autobiographies it says that she intended to call her Daphne after herself, hence the "pretty and interesting" but then just forgot to put it in.

Name or no name, the book is set around the nameless narrator which sees her reflecting on a dream she has had. She starts off as a naive young woman who married a rich widower and settles in his gigantic mansion, Manderley. She finds the memory of the first wife maintaining a grip on her husband and the servants. Especially Mrs Danvers, the housekeeper who was devoted to the first Mrs de Winter, Rebecca. She is constantly trying to undermine and psychologically torture our nameless heroine and subtly suggests she will never be Rebecca. Even to chilling consequences when Mrs Danvers coaxes Mr de Winter to jump from a window, luckily enough our nameless heroine comes to her senses.

As the book unfolds, you feel a great liking to the nameless heroine. You do struggle with the book at first as it is a period novel and written so, although it is written well and the descriptive writing gives you a good picture in your mind.

We loved how the heroine grows stronger as the book progresses, and once she finds out that she was not second best to Rebecca, she comes out of her shell and blossoms, and so does her love for her husband.

We were not surprised at all to find out that du Maurier has based the book on Jane Eyre by Charlotte Bronte, drawing parallels between Jane and the nameless heroine in Rebecca.

A copy of this book was used by the Germans in WWII as a code source; however it was never used as the Germans thought it had been comprised. Ken Follet's "The Key to Rebecca" and Michale Indaetje's book "The English Pateint" refers to the use of this in their books.

We loved this book. Everyone needs to read Rebecca!

We gave Rebecca **8/10** which makes it one of our recommended reads.

The book we are now reading is **Deadlock by Sean Black**