

Reading Group Notes for Sleep Before Evening



- 1. Comment on the significance of the title.**
- 2. Marianne has a certain amount of insecurity from the onset of the book that stems from both her needy mother, and her absent father. She compensates by keeping her feelings inside and seeking her sense of self from the male figures in her life. Discuss this, and how it changes throughout the novel.**
- 3. Ball is a poet as well as a novelist, and Sleep Before Evening is full of poetry, both in terms of the descriptions, and quoted. Discuss two passages which are particularly powerful in their imagery.**
- 4. Marianne has everything going for her at the start of the book -- a brilliant academic career, a gift at playing the piano, a scholarship at a good university. Why did she slip so far?**
- 5. Discuss the attraction that Marianne feels for Miles. Where does it originate and what keeps it going?**
- 6. One of the key themes in the book is the idea of art as a form of emotional recovery. Discuss this notion in relation to the book and how it plays out.**
- 7. There are a number of motifs in the book -- the waves of the ocean, chess, a butterfly, the white sterility of the hospital. Discuss these.**
- 8. New York City is so pervasive in this novel that it's almost a character. Discuss the role of the city in this book.**
- 9. A recent magazine article spoke about the way the novel draws together the juxtaposition of maternal and paternal, creative and logical influences that shape Marianne's life. Talk about these influences in the book, and then in your own life.**

10. "She let her hand drop, good intentions falling across the hall like marbles, while she turned and walked away from school." (131) Discuss this moment -- the disassociation Marianne feels and the impact of this moment in terms of the book.

11. It could be said that there are multiple births in this book -- some referred to or remembered, some metaphoric and some actual. Discuss these (and note the number of birth references).

12. "Each living cell in a given moment of time and space forms part of a greater whole." (291) Discuss this sentence in context of the book, and talk about what it means.

To invite the author to come and speak to your reading group, either in person (depending on location), or virtually, through chat room/internet/telephone, please [contact Magdalena](#).