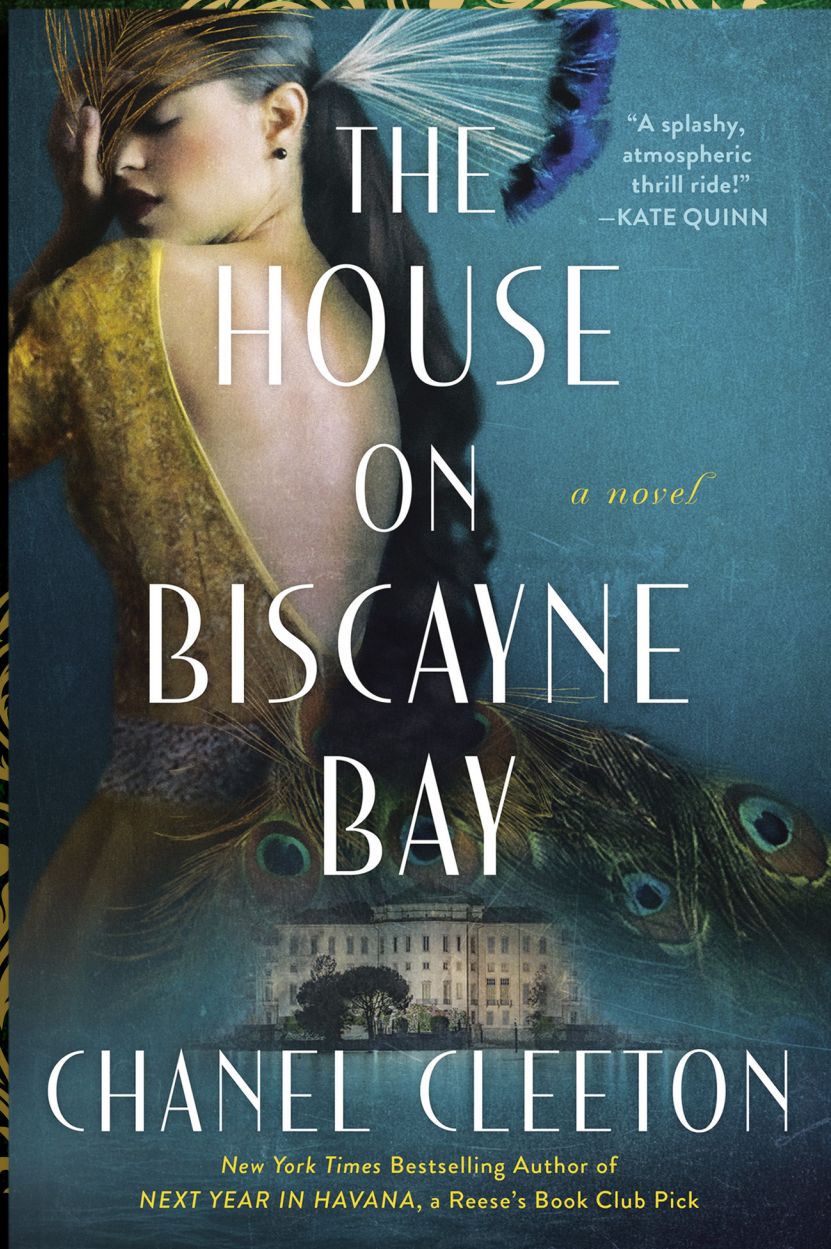


# Book Club Kit



BERKLEY

## Dear Reader,

**B**ooks have been a constant passion in my life. Some of my favorite memories are of the sensation of sinking into a novel and being fully immersed in the setting, the unmatched sheer delight of creating a core reading memory. *Jane Eyre* was one of those books for me.

I read *Jane Eyre* in an unlikely setting: my high school debate classroom. My professor had a bookshelf in the room, and if we finished our work, we could read during the remaining class time. My journey with *Jane Eyre* continued for a week as I devoured the novel during my free time. I was no longer in a high school classroom in Florida; I was in that mysterious, atmospheric house with Jane and loving every moment of it.

When I began brainstorming my next novel, I thought of the genres I love to read, the books that have me turning the pages to see what happens next. I'd had the opportunity to write, in many of my favorite genres, but despite my love for the genre, I hadn't written a Gothic novel. As I envisioned the Gothic novel I would write as a Cuban-American who grew up in Florida, I knew that I wanted it to be set in an atmospheric house teeming with secrets, scandals, and history. The setting came to me immediately. My mysterious, glamorous, treacherous house was meant to be in Miami. After all, with the nickname of the "Magic City," Miami has always felt like a place where anything and everything is possible.

Writing *The House on Biscayne Bay* carried me on an unforgettable adventure as I time travel to Miami following the Great War and then later to the 1940s, the journey of the fictional Marbrisa and its enigmatic residents and guests set against the backdrop of two fascinating periods in history. I was inspired by the natural landscape and animals, and by the grand homes that were built during this time. I wanted Marbrisa to celebrate the spirit that shaped these glamorous estates and to capture the promise of Miami that draws so many.

*The House on Biscayne Bay* gave me the opportunity to incorporate so many elements that I love: suspense, engaging history, family triumphs and tragedies, two heroines on journeys of self-discovery, and forbidden love. Joining the elements I've always loved writing with a Gothic setting proved to be one of my absolute favorite experiences and I am so excited for this new adventure. I can't wait to introduce readers to the enigmatic characters whose lives take center stage at Marbrisa—and I'm not just talking about the peacocks!

Thank you so much for your passion and dedication to books and their authors, and for all of your support.

*Happy reading.*

**CHANEL CLEETON**

# Discussion Questions

## 1

*The House on Biscayne Bay* alternates between Anna's life in 1918 and Carmen's life in 1941. Which heroine did you identify with more—Anna or Carmen? What characteristics in their personalities did you relate to? What differences? How do they grow and change throughout the novel?

## 2

The novel focuses on Anna's marriage to her husband, Robert. The reader sees both the joy and heartbreak in their relationship. How does their marriage evolve throughout the story? What do you think about the decisions they made? How do Anna's views on her marriage change throughout the book?

## 3

Both Carolina and Anna are heavily influenced by their marriages. What parallels do you see between their experiences? What differences?

## 4

Carmen and her sister, Carolina, have a fraught relationship. Which sister did you identify with more? How did their past family dynamics influence their present interactions? Did you relate to their struggles?

## 5

When Anna first arrives at Marbrisa, she's a fish out of water in an unfamiliar setting. Can you relate to her experience? If you experienced something similar, how did it affect you?

## 6

The book begins with Anna's sentiment, "I cannot for the life of me imagine why anyone would want to live in Florida." Have you been to Florida before or have you lived there? What are your impressions of the state?

## 7

The construction of Marbrisa hearkens back to a time when grand houses were being built in Florida. Have you ever toured such estates? What did you think of them? How did you envision the lives of people who lived there?

## 8

Marbrisa's architect, Michael Harrison, states: "I like to think of the houses I build as having their own personalities." Do you agree with him? Why or why not? How do you think Marbrisa's personality shines through in the novel?

## 9

How does the novel's setting influence the book? What examples of this do you see?

## 10

*The House on Biscayne Bay* features many of the hallmarks of a Gothic novel. What are some of your favorite Gothic novels? What do you enjoy about the genre?

## 11

Some of the characters suggest that Marbrisa might be haunted. Do you believe in ghosts? Have you had any experiences that influenced your belief?