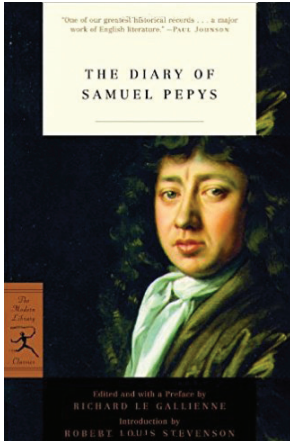


Bayou Bend/Rienzi Book Club Guide

July 2018



Reading Guide:

***The Diary of Samuel Pepys* by Samuel Pepys, with an introduction by Robert Louis Stevenson, edited with a preface by Richard Le Gallienne**

1. How would you describe Samuel Pepys? Were there things about his character that surprised you?
2. Why is this diary worth examining to understand better this time period in English history?
3. Is Pepys a reliable narrator? Do you think he was a typical Restoration-era man?
4. Pepys takes readers through the major events of the 1660s, starting with the coronation of King Charles II. Did you find that his explanation and description of the events that day met your expectations?
5. Pepys often speaks of his infatuation with Barbara Villiers Palmer, Duchess of Cleveland, better known as the Countess of Castlemaine. Fellow diarist John Evelyn called her “the curse of the nation.” How does Pepys characterize her?
6. On August 15, 1665, Pepys leads his diary entry about a dream he had in which Lady Castlemaine “was in my arms and was admitted to use all the dalliance I desire with her.” A few lines later, he muses on the escapist quality of dreams with regard to the horrible deaths due to the plague then occurring: “then we should not need to be so fearful of death, as we are this plague time.” What do you make of this entry? How does he invoke dreams in other parts of the diary?
7. One of the longest single entries in the diary is September 2, 1666, the start of the Great Fire of London. What did Pepys advise King Charles and the Duke of York to do to spare as much of the city as possible?
8. What kind of rumors are swirling around the cause of the fire?
9. Not all of Pepys’s actions and traits are admirable. Were there times while reading about his actions that you wanted to reprimand and denounce his behavior?
10. How does this diary compare to other diaries you have read? Does it compel you to read more literature like this one?

Author Biography

Samuel Pepys (1633–1703) was witness to many of the major events taking place in London during the Restoration (1660–85). Pepys was an administrator in the British Navy and served as a Member of Parliament for Harwich. He was present during the coronation of King Charles II in 1661, and throughout the 1660s he described events around the Great Plague of 1665 and Great Fire of 1666. At times childlike in his zeal for life, Pepys recorded a vivid account that is regarded as a true-to-life representation of early modern London. Originally written in a shorthand developed by Thomas Shelton, Pepys's diary was lost to readers until the 19th century, when it was published for the first time.

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