

LIANE MORIARTY



here

one



moment

READING GROUP NOTES

FROM THE AUTHOR OF *BIG LITTLE LIES*



Blurb

If you knew when you were going to die, what would you do differently?

It all begins on a flight from Hobart to Sydney. The flight will be smooth. It will land safely. Everyone who gets on the plane will get off the plane.

But almost all of them will be changed forever.

Because on this ordinary flight, something extraordinary happens. 'A lady', unremarkable until she isn't, predicts how and when many of the passengers are going to die. For some, death is far in the future; for others, it is very close.

A brilliantly constructed story that looks at free will and destiny, grief and love, and the endless struggle to maintain certainty and control in an uncertain world. Liane Moriarty is a modern-day Jane Austen who humorously skewers social mores while spinning a web of mystery and asking profound, universal questions.

'Liane Moriarty is a genuine GENIUS. *Here One Moment* is off the scale brilliant'
MARIAN KEYES

Praise for Liane Moriarty

'Liane Moriarty produces novels that are miracles of structure as well as human insight' *SYDNEY MORNING HERALD*

'Like drinking a pink cosmo laced with arsenic' *USA TODAY*

'Emotionally riveting' *WASHINGTON POST*

'Funny and scary' STEPHEN KING

'One of the few authors I'll drop anything for' JOJO MOYES





About Liane Moriarty

Liane Moriarty is the Australian author of nine internationally bestselling novels, including the No. 1 *New York Times* bestsellers *The Husband's Secret*, *Big Little Lies*, *Truly Madly Guilty* and *Apples Never Fall*. Her books have sold more than twenty million copies worldwide, including four million in Australia and New Zealand, and have been translated into more than forty languages.

Big Little Lies, *Truly Madly Guilty* and *Apples Never Fall* all debuted at No. 1 on the *New York Times* bestseller list – the first time this has ever been achieved by an Australian author. *Big Little Lies*, *Nine Perfect Strangers* and *Apples Never Fall* have been adapted into successful television series. In 2021, *Apples Never Fall* was the No. 1 bestselling title in Australia.

Liane is also the author of the Space Brigade series for children. She lives in Sydney with her husband, son and daughter.





A Reader's Introduction to *Here One Moment*

** Please note, this summary contains spoilers **

On a flight from Hobart to Sydney on an otherwise ordinary Friday afternoon, a woman named Cherry stands up and proceeds down the aisle, pointing at each passenger and telling them how and at what age they are going to die.

The reactions among the passengers are unsurprisingly varied. Some pay no attention. Some are delighted – they are going to live long, healthy lives and die of old age (and besides, surely the poor old woman is suffering dementia and it's all just a bit of fun). But some are horrified. Death by car accident, age nineteen? Death by drug overdose at thirty-seven? Death by breast cancer, respiratory infection, heart disease, complications from diabetes? Even though all profess to understand that it is not possible to predict the future, they cannot forget what they have heard.

Leo Vodnik returns home to his wife and two children and his stressful, time-consuming job. His boss watches him like a hawk and insists upon perfect time management and work utilisation rate at all times. If this wasn't bad enough, Leo now has the idea of dying in a workplace accident within the next year hanging over him.

Paula Binici, a lawyer who is now the stay-at-home mother of a preschooler and a baby, can't get the awful idea of losing baby Timmy to drowning at age seven out of her mind. She enrolls him in three swim schools and tries to fight off the shadow of the obsessive-compulsive disorder she has successfully kept at bay since her teens.

Eve Archer-Fern, newly married, is aghast to hear that her gentle, loving husband of only a few hours is expected to end her life in five years' time. It is something he would never, ever do – or would he?

Ethan Chang simply cannot believe that he will die as the result of an assault when he is thirty – which is only a few months away. The most violent thing that has ever happened to him was breaking his wrist tripping over at a rock-climbing centre (and he hadn't even started climbing!). But the thought won't leave him alone. Death is already on his mind – he's just lost a friend, shockingly young, to an aneurysm.





Sue O'Sullivan, an ER nurse and mother of five, is taken aback to hear she only has three years to live, and will succumb to pancreatic cancer. Although she and her husband Max laugh off their predictions, Sue decides to be tested and is relieved when she gets the all-clear. But then she wakes up one morning with terrible abdominal pain . . .

Then there is Allegra, the beautiful cabin manager trying to deal with the crisis on the plane while a toddler vomits all over her and she injures her back lifting a passenger's unreasonably heavy luggage. To top it off, it is her twenty-eighth birthday and she has just been told she will die of self-harm before she reaches twenty-nine.

The passengers and crew all go home and get on with their lives – but for some, the predictions 'the Death Lady' has made remain in their thoughts and start to affect how they act and the decisions they make. Then people start dying as predicted.

Eve and Paula, having run into each other at the funeral of two elderly doctors from the plane, set up a website to track the predictions and to try to find 'the Death Lady'. Meanwhile, Cherry herself is unaware of the furore she has created. She has no memory of what happened between sitting in her seat on the plane and being woken after landing.

As the novel progresses, we find out about Cherry and what led her to behave the way she did on that flight. Through the carefully unfolding story of her life, we come to understand why she was able to make accurate predictions about people, and how and why they were so accurate – at least at first. At the same time, we see how the passengers respond to the idea that their lives might be cut short, and how this effects how they think and what they do in response.





Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think the book is titled *Here One Moment*?
2. There are three epigraphs in this novel – two in the beginning and one at the end. What do you think the two epigraphs at the start are suggesting about the story to come? Do the characters' stories align with these quotations? And how do you think the closing epigraph ties off the novel?
3. *Here One Moment* has two distinct parts: sections written in the third person, present tense, detailing the stories of certain passengers from the flight; and sections coming to us from Cherry, 'the Death Lady' herself in the first person, gradually telling her story. How does this structure influence your perception of the events in the novel?
4. The ideas of determinism and free will play a big part in the novel. On page 22, we hear this from the bearded determinist at Hazel's dinner party: '*The idea of determinism, he said, is that everything that happens, and every decision or action you make, is "causally inevitable."*' That is, everything that has led to that moment in time means you cannot act in any other way than the way you *do* act. Do you think this is true, or do you believe people always have a choice to act differently? How is this idea explored in the novel?
5. Cherry's mother always said, '*Fate can't be fought.*' Cherry tells us on page 164 that she doesn't believe this, that there are things you can do to change your fate: '*You won't necessarily win against fate, but you should at least put up a fight.*' Do you agree? Why or why not?
6. Similarly, Cherry says on page 224, '*This is the thing with a heads-up. The person has to believe. The person has to change their actions.*' What are some of the precautions the characters take to try to change the fate Cherry gave them? Do you think they would have done those things without their predictions? Do the actions they take hinder or help (or make no difference)?
7. The novel is set in Australia, mostly in Tasmania and Sydney, New South Wales. In what ways do these settings play a role in the plot, and in each of the characters' stories?
8. On page 197, Cherry tells us about the gambler's fallacy, or Monte Carlo fallacy: the belief that the probability of future events changes based on past events (assuming those events are independent). Were you aware of this idea? Can you think of some other real-world examples of this erroneous belief?





9. Some of the characters turn to superstition to ward off what they perceive to be bad luck or negative events, such as Paula allowing her mother-in-law to give her children evil eye bracelets, and Cherry's father's pilot friends carrying out rituals to keep them safe during the war. Why do you think people turn to superstition in this way? Do you have any superstitions yourself?
10. The novel touches on chaos theory – the idea that one small initial change in a process or system can cause much more significant changes over time. The butterfly effect (i.e. that a butterfly flapping its wings in Brazil might cause a tornado in Texas, for example) is an underlying principle of this theory. What are some examples from the novel of the chaos theory in action? Can you think of any in the real world?
11. On page 185, Cherry says: *'I'm glad we no longer say "old maids", and for the widespread availability of antidepressants, dating apps, sperm banks and vibrators. It's much easier to be a single woman now. Progress isn't always bad.'* Do you agree? What other changes for women are evident in the novel? Discuss.
12. There is a saying that 'from crisis comes opportunity'. Several of our characters, and in particular Allegra and Leo, make decisions after their early-death predictions which would seem distinctly out of character but which have a big effect on their lives. What are these decisions? Do you think they would have acted in this way without Cherry's prediction?
13. In the opening chapters, it becomes clear that until Cherry does something very unexpected, nobody notices her. Many older women in our society report that they sometimes feel invisible. Towards the end of the novel, Cherry tells us, *'Look a little closer at the next older lady you meet. You might see that sparkle.'* (page 325) What do you think *Here One Moment* has to say about the role of older women in society?
14. In the absence of evidence to the contrary, the passengers on Cherry's flight think she must be a psychic. What did you, as a reader, suspect was going on? What, if any, red herrings were there in the plot that distracted the onlooker from the truth about Cherry?
15. On page 358, when Cherry expresses to her mother that she doesn't want to move to Perth, Mae says: *'Cherry! If you tell yourself you're going to be unhappy, you will be! You can choose how to see your future!'* In other words, you can 'fake it till you make it'. Do you think this is good advice? Does it work?





16. On page 292, Eve says about her prediction: *'It is so wrong that her sweet Dom should be accused of something he would never do, and he can't even prove his innocence, because his guilt is supposedly in his future.'* What do you think it is about the predictions of death that the characters find so unnerving? How do you think you would react in the same situation?
17. On page 397, Cherry reports a conversation she has with her mother and aunt about her mother's fortune-telling business:
'Why were your customers mostly women?' I wondered.
'Because women are more in touch with their intuition,' suggested my mother.
'Because women have less control over their lives,' said Auntie Pat grimly. Who do you think is right, and why?
18. Many of the characters' stories talk about the effects of grief and the different ways people grieve and deal with loss. What part does grief play in Cherry's story? How does Ethan's loss of his friend Harvey affect him?
19. Cherry mentions the 'just world' fallacy on page 459, which is the erroneous belief that the world is fair – that good behaviour is rewarded and bad behaviour is punished. Can you think of any examples of this playing out (or not), both in the novel and in real life?
20. Do you believe in psychics' ability to read or predict the future? Have you had any experiences that helped inform this belief? Do you think statistics or probability play a role? Discuss.
21. Cherry shows us Ned's practice of choosing 'One Good Thing' about each day and writing it down. What do you think this tells us about Ned? Do you have a practice like this? If so, what are the benefits?

