

ghost eaters

Book Club Kit

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Pssst . . . wanna get haunted?

Let me start off by saying thank you for picking up this book. When I first started writing *Ghost Eaters*, I began with a simple question:

What is it like to be truly haunted?

I am, unabashedly, a haunted house fan. I love ghost stories. So when it came time to tell one of my own, I wanted to explore the very notion of what it means for a supernatural entity to inhabit a particular vessel. We've had plenty of haunted house stories. Oodles of haunted dolls. Even haunted cars!

But a haunted drug? Had anyone ever tried telling that story before?

The theme of addiction seemed to effortlessly blend into the notion of ghosts, and how the living occasionally have a hard time letting go of the dead.

Maybe it's not the house that's haunted. Maybe it's us. So if you're walking down the street late at night, and a stranger walking in the other direction whispers . . .

Pssst . . . wanna get haunted?

. . . what will you say?

—Clay McLeod Chapman

Snack Menu

Immerse your book club in the plot and setting of *Ghost Eaters* through food.

Virginia Peanuts

Beef Jerky

Mushroom Chips

Stuffed Mushrooms

Pimento Cheese

Blue Crab Dip

Virginia Ham and Biscuit Sliders

M&Ms

Trail Mix

Meiji Chocorooms

Playlist

Listen to the *Ghost Eaters* Playlist, curated by Clay McLeod Chapman, at open.spotify.com/user/quirkbooks or use these tracks as a starting point for your own playlist!

Pretend We're Dead
L7

The Killing Moon
Echo & the Bunnymen

Sour Times
Portishead

Summertime Rolls
Jane's Addiction

Bury a Friend
Billie Eilish

The Earth Died Screaming
Tom Waits

Susprium
Thom Yorke

White Rabbit
Jefferson Airplane

Basic Space
The XX

Hurt
Nine Inch Nails

cellophane
FKA Twigs

Under the Milky Way
The Church

People Who Died
The Jim Carroll Band

Pyramid Song
Radiohead

**The Other Side of Mt.
Heart Attack**
Liars

Death Is Not the End
Nick Cave & the Bad Seeds

Haunted Richmond!

Test your book club's knowledge of Richmond history with these trivia questions.

1. **TRUE OR FALSE:** The Vampire of Richmond is real.

ANSWER: TRUE . . . ish. The Richmond Vampire is a bit of local folklore that has persisted over the years in Hollywood Cemetery. You can learn a little bit more about him here: bit.ly/RichmondVampire.

2. **QUESTION:** Do you hear a train whistle blowing in the dead of the night?

ANSWER: If you said yes, you might be hearing the work train that fatefully passed through the Church Hill Tunnel on October 2, 1925, as it collapsed, claiming the lives of four men, whose bodies, along with the train, are still below. Read more about the haunted tunnel here: bit.ly/ChurchHillTunnel.

3. **QUESTION:** Is Edgar Allan Poe really from Richmond?

ANSWER: Sort of! Poe may have been born in Boston, Massachusetts, but his parents were a pair of itinerant thespians. Fate brought them to Richmond, Virginia, only for Edgar's mother to succumb to tuberculosis while performing with a local theater company. You can learn more about young Edgar's time in Richmond here: bit.ly/RichmondPoe.

4. **QUESTION:** What happened in Richmond on December 26, 1811?

ANSWER: The Great Richmond Theater Fire, of course! Known as the deadliest tragedy in the country at the time, theater patrons and performers alike were trapped inside the brick building when a tapestry onstage caught fire. The unclaimed bodies of those burned in the blaze are now buried in its basement, while a church was built above. Some say you can still hear the ghosts of those scorched thespians reciting their lines. Read all about it here: bit.ly/RichmondTheaterFire.

5. **QUESTION:** What's so haunted about the beautiful Belle Isle?

ANSWER: It may seem like a picturesque spot to take a walk along the James River, but did you know Belle Isle was in fact a prison camp during the Civil War? Untold hundreds of soldiers froze to death on that quaint patch of land you're taking a lovely stroll on . . . and their spirits aren't so far behind you! You can learn all about Belle Isle here: bit.ly/HauntedBelleIsle.

6. **QUESTION:** What's the most haunted spot in all of Richmond?

ANSWER: The Byrd Theater! One of Richmond's older movie palaces still screens film today . . . but don't glance up at the balcony, because you might just spot the phantom of Robert Coulter, former manager of the Byrd. Turns out he still loves to watch the movies!

Discuss *Ghost Eaters*

Review the following questions to help jumpstart conversation surrounding *Ghost Eaters*.

1. At the beginning of the book, readers are introduced to college friends Silas, Erin, Amara, and Tobias in a cemetery. What were your first impressions of the group? And how does this introduction foreshadow future events?
2. After losing Silas to an overdose, Erin is dealing with both guilt and grief. Which emotion do you think drives her to take Ghost?
3. The pill-popping séance that Erin, Amara, and Tobias have occurs in an unfinished and abandoned housing development. Why do you think the author chose this setting?
4. Erin experiences unfathomable side effects under the influence of Ghost. Which side effect stuck with you the most? And why do you think she still kept going back for more despite the side effects?
5. Would you take a pill like Ghost for the opportunity to be reunited with a loved one?
6. Addiction takes a horrifying turn at the end of the novel. Did you find the process of addiction up to that point realistic or relatable?
7. How do you think the use of the supernatural captured the real-life horrors of addiction and America's sordid history?
8. What do you imagine happens to Erin after the book ends?