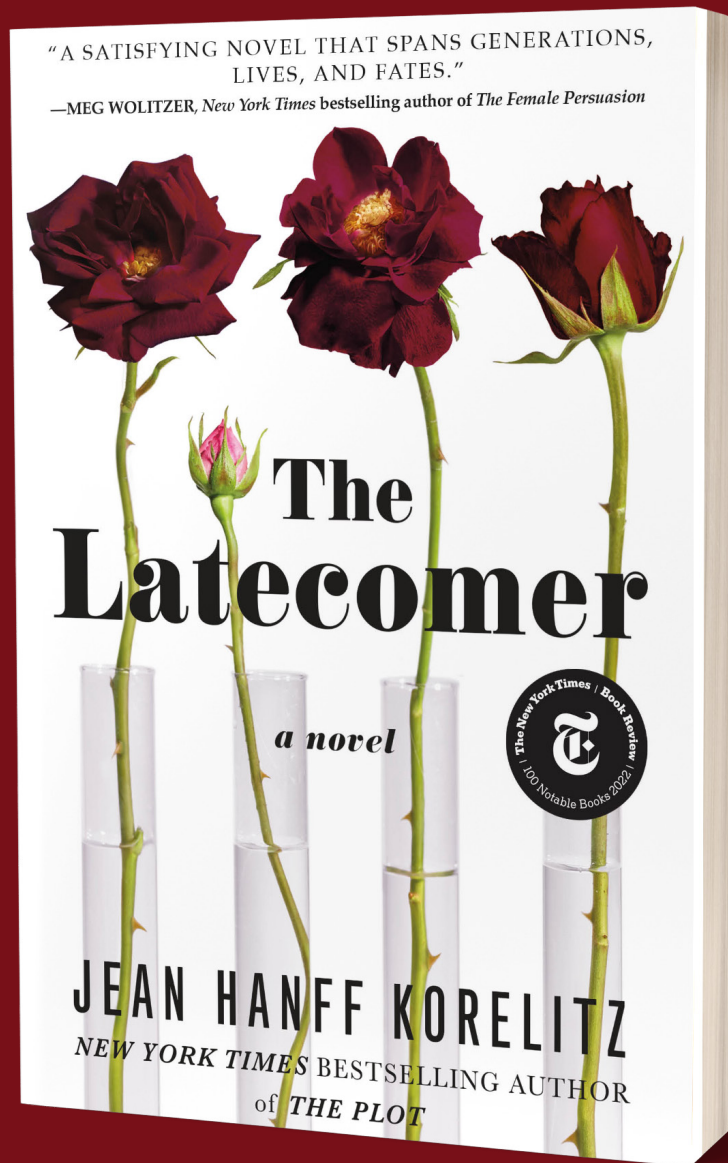


BOOK CLUB KIT



“Spanning decades and told through multiple POVs, the story of the Oppenheimer family will keep you riveted. Strong personalities and an abundance of questionable choices will give you plenty of topics for discussion.”

—**Amber, Sisters Book & Puzzle Club**

“Getting to experience opposing views and, at some points, changing your own views is half the fun of discussing literature, and Jean Hanff Korelitz gives readers plenty to debate.”

—**Mary, Pass the Wine Book Club**

Jean Hanff Korelitz is the *New York Times* bestselling author of the novels *The Plot, You Should Have Known* (which aired on HBO in October 2020 as *The Undoing*, starring Nicole Kidman, Hugh Grant, and Donald Sutherland), *Admission* (adapted as a film in 2013 starring Tina Fey), *The Devil and Webster*, *The White Rose*, *The Sabbathday River*, and *A Jury of Her Peers*, as well as *Interference Powder*, a novel for children. Her company BOOKTHEWRITER hosts Pop-Up Book Groups in which small groups of readers discuss new books with their authors. She lives in New York City with her husband, Irish poet Paul Muldoon.



A Conversation with Jean Hanff Korelitz

How did you come up with the idea for *The Latecomer*?

I'd heard about families with children conceived by in vitro fertilization who have additional children years later from leftover embryos, and I found this really fascinating. I was especially interested in the impact on the later child of learning that their family has essentially begun without them. In one sense, it's no different from what any younger sibling eventually realizes, but here the children have all been "made" at the same time, and there is a random or human factor in who gets born and who does not. I thought: What would that feel like, to realize what you've missed? And what if the later child somehow answers the brokenness in the older siblings and in the family as a whole? So, I made up a family to explore some of these issues and watch those ideas play out.

How is *The Latecomer* different from or similar to your previous seven novels?

I've written on both sides of the literary/thriller line, wherever that may be — if someone locates it, would they please enlighten me? — and *The Latecomer* definitely belongs on the literary side. This is not to say that there aren't twists: Life is too short not to have plot twists in every novel one reads! But the story of this family does not center around a crime — at least not a crime in the conventional sense!

The sibling dynamics in this novel are so nuanced and complex. What was your process in creating these very different siblings?

It was like setting off on four different journeys at once, and those journeys didn't even begin in the same place or at the same time! I was fascinated by the ways in which these brothers and sisters tried so hard to escape one another, and how they were fated to return, but only by the intervention of their lost sibling. Or, I suppose you could argue, siblings, plural. Keeping track of who knows what and when they know it was quite complicated, but worth it in the end.

What do you hope your readers will take away from the book?

That people aren't always who they appear to be. That houses can be like people in more ways than one. That Henry Darger isn't the only Outsider Artist. That religion and politics sometimes serve the purpose of more intimate human needs. That sometimes we only learn to know a person after they've left us. That great art can heal our souls. That even families twisted by resentments and grievances can be brought back together by forgiveness and love.

Discussion Questions

1. Which character's story were you most interested in reading about?
2. How did your opinions of the siblings change throughout the novel? Was there anyone you hated in the beginning and loved by the end?
3. Why do you think that despite Johanna's best efforts to create a loving home, her family failed to be close?

Submitted by Story Sisters (Olathe, KS)

4. Johanna viewed her family through rose-colored glasses. Do you think she did them a disservice by pretending all was well and not actually acknowledging the deep rifts that grew among the siblings?

Submitted by The Literary Lovelies (Boston, MA)

5. What is the role of Joseph Oppenheimer (Judd Suss) in the story? What does he represent?
6. What role does hoarding play in Sally's life? Why do you think Sally chose to pursue a career of finding valuables from lifetimes of accumulated items? Do you see any parallels between Salo's passion for paintings and Sally's calling in antiques?
7. Why do you think Phoebe is so angry about not being born at the same time as her siblings? Do you agree that she was "left behind"? What would the family dynamic have been like had Harrison, Sally, or Lewyn been the latecomer instead?
8. Were you surprised by the timing of Salo's death? Why or why not?
9. Why do you think Eli did what he did? What was the goal of his "long con"?
10. Was it realistic for Phoebe to choose the college that she did? Why do you think she would want to go there?

Submitted by Pass the Wine book club (Rockton, IL)

11. Can you relate to any of the family dynamics portrayed in the book? For example, how have you seen grief or guilt impact families that you know or are a part of?

Submitted by No Shelf Control book club (Moyock, NC)

12. In what ways was Salo's car accident responsible for everything that transpired with his family? In what ways was the accident not responsible? Is there anything in your own past or family history that you can pinpoint as a driving force in the way your life is today, good or bad?

SALO OPPENHEIMER'S ART COLLECTION

Although Salo Oppenheimer's art collection is fictional, many of the paintings and artists represented there are real. Here's your guide to this fantasy art collection.

Untitled blackboard painting (1970)

Cy Twombly

Three Studies of George Dyer (1966)

Francis Bacon

Ocean Park #30 (1970)

Richard Diebenkorn

Cathedral (1959)

Autumn Gold (1957)

Hans Hoffman

Dylan Study II (1963)

Brice Marden

Lawn Sprinkler (1967)

David Hockney

Painting Number 2 (1954)

Franz Kline

Harbor Number 1 (1957)

Agnes Martin

Sinful Cities (1980)

Sin (1970)

Ed Ruscha

Fiery Sunset (1973)

Alma Thomas

Achrome (1962)

Piero Manzoni

Spatial Concepts: Expectations (1959)

Lucio Fontana

The Kathredal – Mother Symbolically Represented (1935) (among others)

Achilles G. Rizzoli, *Outsider Artist*

"*Twombly* made this work using an unusual technique: he sat on the shoulders of a friend, who shuttled back and forth along the length of the canvas, thus allowing the artist to create his fluid, continuous lines."

–MoMA website

"...Salo could wander into Christie's or Sotheby's, get himself a paddle, and walk out with one of *Diebenkorn's* Ocean Park paintings, or a slab painting by *Hans Hoffman*, both things he actually did before the 1970s ended." (chapter 2)

FUN FACT

Comedian-actor and avid art collector Steve Martin helped the author choose artists to be featured in the Oppenheimer collection!

"It was at an absurdly low-key auction that he first encountered *Franz Kline* and *Agnes Martin*, and in Andrew Crispo's gallery, while Crispo himself was in the back lavishing attention on a Swiss collector, Salo wrote a check for a large work by *Ed Ruscha*. He brought the picture home to Third Avenue, tied to the roof rack of an accommodating cab." (chapter 2)

"The three paintings were of heads, grotesque and distorted on a dark background, each facing in a different direction, each with features swirling into chaos. Johanna, left alone with it (them) day after day, had moved past her initial alarm and even repulsion toward this painting and into an even more problematic way of looking at it. She had begun to think of those three heads as bad fairy counterparts to the three babies kicking her..." (chapter 4)

"*Alma Thomas*. Okay, she had a show at the Whitney in '72, but nobody bought her work for another generation. And some of the Italian artists – *Piero Manzoni* and *Lucio Fontana*. *Arte povera*. Dirt cheap when he bought them. Not today. This is a treasure house." –Lewyn (chapter 31)

"...the Rizzoli drawings in the warehouse which he wanted to gift to Stella in some formal way, separating them from the other art. The Rizzolis had no great value... in fact, they hadn't appreciated at all since that first Outsider Art Fair. But he wanted them to belong to Stella." (chapter 25)



If you decide to adopt *The Latecomer* for your book club, we would love to hear about it! Please let us know by emailing us at reader@celadonbooks.com or post on social media using the hashtags **#CeladonBookClub** and **#TheLatecomerBook**.

Thank you for your consideration.

Your friends at Celadon Books

