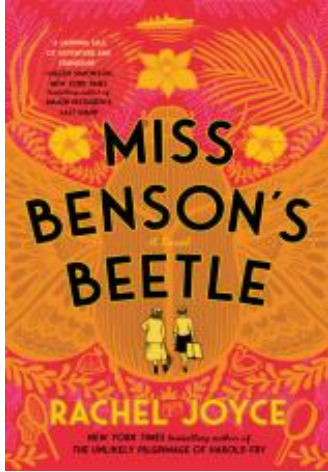


Miss Benson's Beetle

by Rachel Joyce



About the Book

From the bestselling author of **THE UNLIKELY PILGRIMAGE OF HAROLD FRY** comes an uplifting, irresistible novel about two women on a life-changing adventure, where they must risk everything, break all the rules and discover their best selves --- together.

She?s going too far to go it alone.

It is 1950. London is still reeling from World War II, and Margery Benson, a schoolteacher and spinster, is trying to get through life, surviving on scraps. One day, she reaches her breaking point, abandoning her job and small existence to set out on an expedition to the other side of the world in search of her childhood obsession: an insect that may or may not exist --- the golden beetle of New Caledonia.

When she advertises for an assistant to accompany her, the woman she ends up with is the last person she had in mind. Fun-loving Enid Pretty in her tight-fitting pink suit and pom-pom sandals seems to attract trouble wherever she goes. But together these two British women find themselves drawn into a cross-ocean adventure that exceeds all expectations and delivers something neither of them expected to find: the transformative power of friendship.

Discussion Guide

1. How do the various members of Margery's family --- her father, her mother, her aunts, Barbara --- inform who she is as a person? What values and beliefs, good and bad, do they pass along to her?
2. How do Margery's core beliefs --- about herself, about the world --- change throughout the novel?

3. When Margery stole the boots, what was your initial reaction? What do you think the boots represent to her?
4. How does Margery and Enid's relationship evolve? How do they complement each other as characters? How do they learn from and change each other?
5. Why do you think Mr. Mundic fixated on Margery to the point that he followed her to New Caledonia? What does the journey mean to him? What similarities, if any, do Margery and Mundic share?
6. How did you envision Margery's helmet? It has its own presence in most scenes of the book. What does it represent to you?
7. What characters did you find yourself identifying with most? Do you think your personality is more aligned with Margery's or Enid's? Which would you want as a friend?
8. Do you think Freya will actually go to New Caledonia? What about Margery and Gloria's story do you think inspired her?
9. What does the golden beetle mean to Margery? Do you have a "golden beetle" in your own life? If so, what is it and what does it mean to you?
10. What did you think was going to be in the red valise? Were you surprised when it was finally opened?

Author Bio

Rachel Joyce is the author of the *Sunday Times* and international bestsellers THE UNLIKELY PILGRIMAGE OF HAROLD FRY, THE LOVE SONG OF MISS QUEENIE HENNESSY and PERFECT. THE UNLIKELY PILGRIMAGE OF HAROLD FRY was short-listed for the Commonwealth Book Prize and long-listed for the Man Booker Prize and has been translated into 36 languages. Joyce was awarded the Specsavers National Book Awards New Writer of the Year in 2012. She is also the author of the digital short story "A Faraway Smell of Lemon" and is the award-winning writer of more than 30 original afternoon plays and classic adaptations for BBC Radio 4. Rachel Joyce lives with her family in Gloucestershire.

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