



Reading
Group
Notes

Love Unedited

*It was the impossibility
of him that kept her
coming back...*

Caro
Llewellyn

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Blurb

It was the impossibility of him that kept her coming back.

Edna gave up everything when she fell in love with an acclaimed writer, leaving Australia and moving to New York, where the publishing and literary scene was the backdrop to their secret story.

When Molly, an Australian editor working in New York, discovers a novel by an anonymous author, she is drawn intimately into the story. She becomes determined to find the author and know how the story ends – not imagining that she will uncover shocking truths about her own life along the way.

A compelling literary mystery about desire, creativity, food, longing and the ever-shifting power dynamics of love.

‘A unique blend of literary fiction, metafiction and romance, *Love Unedited* is a character-based novel that explores the minutiae of love and relationships in intimate and compelling detail . . . Celebrating life’s highs and lows, this multi-layered novel is an ode to love in its various forms’ **Books+Publishing**

About Caro Llewellyn

Caro Llewellyn is the author of the Stella Prize shortlisted memoir *Diving into Glass* and *Fresh! Market people and their food*, co-author of *Jobs for the Girls: Women talk about running a business of their own* and editor of the anthology *My One True Love*. For more than three decades she has worked with writers variously in publishing and as a Festival Director and human rights advocate in Australia, France and the US. She lives in the US with chef Maurizio Esposito.

Discussion Questions

These questions contain spoilers

1. *Love Unedited* is a story within a story. How does this structure play with the significance of the title?
2. The narrator talks about having known so many writers that she understands how fiction mines the lives of authors and those around them. Can you think of other works of fiction you've learned have relied on episodes from the author's life?
3. The narrator says she combines different people and stories from her life into her novel. Does this make her an unreliable narrator?
4. The narrator says at one point she knew writers who said they could be more honest in fiction than in memoir. Does 'truth' matter to you as a reader of fiction? What is 'honest' fiction? Does a narrator 'owe' readers honesty? Does a writer? Llewellyn has written a memoir. Do you think these are stories tell a truth about her life she couldn't include in the memoir, or is it just all made up?
5. What is the impact of the author keeping the writer's identity anonymous? She makes an analogy of him as her Mr Rochester, referring to a similarly elusive love interest from Charlotte Brontë's 1847 novel *Jane Eyre*. She also refers to him passingly as her Mr Big from the popular television show *The Sex in the City*. Could this play into the male literary giant as an archetype? Why or why not? Does this centre Edna as the hero of the novel or divert attention away from her? Can she be more honest if she doesn't name him?
6. The character of Giancarlo has trouble reading and writing but has managed to hide it all his life. Did you know an Adult Learning Australia report from 2023 says, '1 in 7 Australians (14%) have very poor literacy skills and 1 in 3 (30%) Australians have literacy skills low enough to make them vulnerable to unemployment and social exclusion'? Have you ever thought about how difficult life would be if you couldn't read or write? Have you ever known anyone with low literacy skills? Do you think it's right that there is often a lot of shame associated with low literacy?
7. Giancarlo's hidden disability is not the only disability in the book. How has disability and illness been portrayed in the novel? The author has a lot of experience with disability herself. How do you think her real-life experiences might have influenced her writing?
8. Do you think the author's view of life living with a disability played a part in Edna's belief that life is short and therefore she should 'burn it up', and that's not 'reckless at all, just deeply sensible' (Page 76)?
9. Even though she works as an editor, is immersed in the literary world, and is a big reader herself, in the end, Molly chooses kindness over reading in her life partner. Kindness is a theme of the book. Do you think the author is encouraging her readers to choose kindness in their own romantic lives?
10. When her writer starts to withdraw, he often leaves suddenly. How does this influence the power dynamics in their relationship, particularly later when we discover Edna has her own reasons for keeping the relationship at arm's length?

11. *'But he also knew how to keep her on a perfectly measured run of line. If he sensed her pulling away, he did or said something that had her swimming against the tide to get back to him.'* (Page 125) How does this power play impact how you feel about the writer? About Edna?
12. *'She decided that, even at arm's length, this was more than she'd ever had. And she sometimes wondered if maybe it suited her – if that ice chip in her heart was relieved by the distance, if it would have allowed her anything more anyway.'* (Page 69) Does this influence the way you see Edna's choice to continue seeing the writer? What do you think the ice chip represents?
13. How has the writer's early loss of his wife and child impacted the way you see him and how he handles his relationship with Edna? What was the significance of her writer putting his wedding band on his opposite hand, and not say in his pocket?
14. Discuss the similarities and differences between Edna and Molly's seemingly parallel lives. On the surface, their lives start out very similarly but then Molly's diverges when she makes different choices. Why do you think they made such vastly different decisions in life and relationships?
15. What is the role of food in Edna and her writer's relationship? What is the role of food in Molly's relationship to Giancarlo? How do the two differ?
16. How does Molly's belief that she lost her mother to illness shape the person she became? Why do you think Molly's father destroyed all photos of Molly's mother but kept her clothes for Molly to dress up in?
17. The author, Caro Llewellyn, has experience in the literary world, and this book offers us a peek behind the curtain. Did you find the representation of the industry surprising? Is the industry portrayed in a positive or negative light?
18. The mystery at the heart of the story – who is the author of the manuscript and how does the story end – drives Molly to the point of obsession. Why do you think Molly was so drawn to the manuscript?
19. Why do you think Edna changed the ending of her manuscript to reflect Molly's story of finding a loving relationship? What is the point in not being honest about her story even as her life was coming to a close?
20. The novel is about the stories you wish to rewrite. If you could choose to rewrite a love story (or any story) in your life, would you? If so, how would you rewrite it?