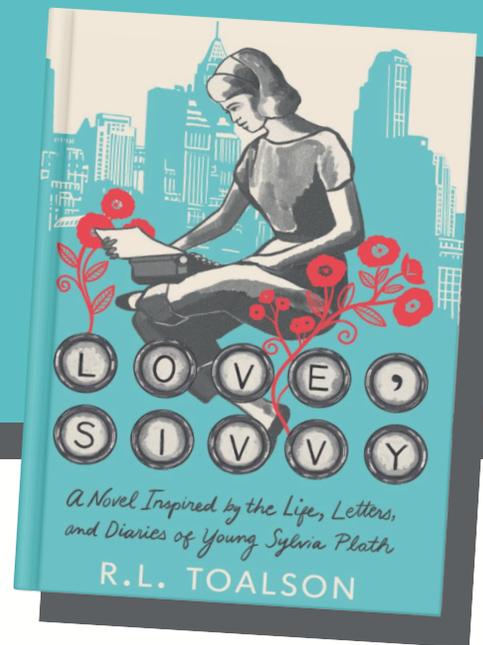


# Reading guide/ Book club questions for *Love, Sivvy*



## On Character and Voice

- How does the verse form help us hear Sylvia's voice more intimately than traditional prose might?
- In what ways does Sylvia's confidence in her genius clash with her self-doubt? Did you find this tension relatable?
- How is Sylvia's relationship with her mother portrayed? Do you see her mother as supportive, overbearing, both, or neither?
- What role do you think Sylvia's brother, Warren, plays in her development, if any?
- How did Sylvia balance friendship with ambition? Do you think she isolated herself, or did her ambition enrich her connections?



## On Ambition and Perfection

- Sylvia often wrestled with the pressure to be perfect. How did this pressure shape her choices and inner world? How does the pressure to be perfect shape your choices and inner world, if at all?
- Do you think perfectionism is portrayed as a strength, a weakness, or both? If both, explain when it's a strength and when it's a weakness.
- How do you see Sylvia's hunger for recognition reflected in her submission of poems and stories? What emotions arose in her when she faces rejection?

## On Gender and Society

- How is the tension between marriage, motherhood, and career portrayed in Sylvia's story?
- What double standards about gender expectations stand out most strongly in the novel?
- If Sylvia were a young woman today, how might her struggles around gender and ambition be similar? Different?

## On Mental Health

- *Love, Sivy* portrays Sylvia's highs and lows with raw honesty. How did the verse structure capture these shifting moods?
- How did Sylvia herself interpret her swings between moods? What is the metaphor she used for them? Do you think this is a good metaphor? Why or why not?
- How did the adults in Sylvia's life (her mother, her teachers, her mentors and patrons) respond to her struggles with depression? Do you think their responses were helpful? Why or why not?
- Did reading about Sylvia's mental health journey in her youth change or deepen how you view her later life and work?



## On Love and Relationships

- Sylvia sorts through many boyfriends—some brief, some more serious. What did you notice about what she sought in love?
- Do you think Sylvia was looking for passion, companionship, or validation in a chosen partner? Or was it all three? Or none?
- How do societal rules about “proper young ladies” influence Sylvia's romantic experiences?

## On Education and Writing

- Teachers and mentors play a strong role in Sylvia's journey. Which adult influence felt most pivotal to you?
- How does Sylvia's hunger for experience (“How do you write anything that matters if you've never experienced anything that matters?”) shape her identity as a writer?
- What literary influences (Woolf, Millay, Eliot, etc.) stood out to you in her journey? Did you see echoes of them in Sylvia's own voice in the story?
- How did you respond to Sylvia's early publication successes and failures?



## On Historical and Cultural Context

- What does the novel reveal about opportunities (and limitations) for women in the late 1940s and early 1950s?
- How do money and class impact Sylvia's choices about college and career?
- The book highlights the culture of "going steady," dating, and reputation. How did that social world shape Sylvia? How is it similar to and different from the dating landscape today?



## On Form and Style

- How does the verse-novel format influence your reading experience compared to traditional biography or fiction?
- Were there particular lines or passages that felt like poetry in their own right?
- How does the blend of fact and imagination shape your understanding of Sylvia Plath as a historical figure?

## On Legacy and Reflection

- Sylvia often repeats that she was "born to be remembered." After reading this novel, what do you think she wanted to be remembered for?
- What parallels did you see between the Sylvia in this novel and the Sylvia who would later write *The Bell Jar* and the iconic poems that made her name?



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