

# BOOK CLUB KIT



# DEAR BOOK CLUB MEMBERS,

What a delight to have *A Curious Beginning* chosen as a book club selection! This is the first installment in the Veronica Speedwell series, and while I have more fun writing her with each passing book, this inaugural adventure has a special place in my heart.

I hardly know where to begin in introducing you to Veronica! She is a product of her time, audacious and independent, perched upon the cusp of a very modern world as technology and innovation race each other towards the dawn of a new century. She makes her living as a lepidopterist, hunting butterflies around the world as she embarks on voyages of discovery. Because she is answerable to no one, she is very much her own person, unfettered by the usual expectations of Victorian women to sit by the hearthside, tatting lace and pouring tea.

In this first book, mysteries and mayhem draw her back to London, and as she sleuths out a murderer, she makes friends in unlikely places, the beginning of the “found family” that increases with each new book. She also uncovers secrets from her own past that rock the very foundation of who she thinks she is—dangerous and scandalous secrets that will change the course of her life. And I couldn’t let her finish this first grand adventure without giving her a sidekick as daring and engaging as she is, the aristocratic black sheep, Revelstoke Templeton-Vane, a former naval surgeon and natural scientist with a penchant for tattoos and a sweet tooth that just won’t quit.

In *A Curious Beginning*, Veronica experiences Victorian England in all its glory and gaslit ghastriness with her usual intrepid spirit. I am so happy you have come along for the ride! I know how much care and thought go into making a choice for a reading group, and I am honored that you have invited Veronica into yours.

Please find me on Twitter and Instagram or drop me a line through my website, [DeannaRaybourn.com](http://DeannaRaybourn.com).

Happy reading!

**DEANNA**





FROM THE DESK OF  
*Veronica Speedwell*

**A SHORT MEMORANDUM ON THE  
IMPORTANCE OF CAREFUL PACKING**

*The preparation for a trip of any duration cannot be undertaken without care and discipline.* The first essential is a traveling costume designed for purpose and style. It should be of serviceable but handsome tweed and cut by a tailor with the strictest attention to detail. The jacket should be loose enough to permit freedom of movement and tight enough so there may be no mistaking one's sex. A slim pair of very fitted trousers should meet the same criteria, and a well-cut skirt will complete a travel ensemble suitable for the most varied of circumstances. (A clever tailor will fashion the skirt so that it may be buttoned up and out of the way for ease of movement.) A pair of leather boots, laced snugly to the knees, will protect against thorns and stray dogs, and if they are firm in the toe, they will aid in warding off impertinent suitors as well.

The prepared traveler will equip herself with a suitable traveling bag, light enough that she may carry it herself—independent of porters—even when fully packed.



# INTO THE BAG SHOULD GO:

**PLAIN HANDKERCHIEFS** as large as a man's and let there be no frivolous lace or embroidery to impede function. They may be used to clean one's teeth, to apply to a moist nose, or to wave farewell to a discarded lover.

**A JAR OF COLD CREAM OF ROSES**

Used to clean and to soften the skin, this will erase the signs of travel from the complexion.

**A SINGLE BOOK, PREFERABLY**

**A FLORILEGIUM** This is for reading upon trains, propping up table legs in disreputable hostelries, or pressing flowers from ardent suitors. The margins may be used for scribbling notes to the same suitors or issuing threats to mortal enemies.

**UNDERLINEN** Of impeccable design and perfect cleanliness, there should be two sets in case one is damaged by over-hasty removal on the part of an ardent gentleman.

**PACKET OF HAIRPINS**

For the securing of one's coiffure and the picking of reluctant locks.

**A FORMAL DRESS** of silk, beautifully made, and of a color selected to flatter the color of one's eyes. The décolletage should be low enough to serve as an evening gown, and the skirt full enough to permit waltzing, climbing out of windows, and horseback riding astride in the event of a hasty departure.

To complete the traveling costume, great care must be given to select **A HAT THAT IS BOTH FLATTERING AND PRACTICAL.** The brim should be wide enough to shield the face from the sun but not so wide as to be blown away in a mischievous breeze. It should be embellished with flowers, butterflies, feathers, OR fruit, but never more than one of the aforementioned. This will bring a smile to one's face when the tribulations of travel become burdensome. I need not mention that the hatpin required to secure this confection may serve as a handsome weapon in moments of extreme necessity. *Bon voyage!*

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# Discussion Questions

1. Veronica and Stoker were born into quite different circumstances yet they share much in common. In what ways have their paths been similar and how have they varied?
2. Curiosity plays an important role in Veronica's decision-making. How would you have handled the choices she made in following her curious nature?
3. Why do you think Veronica chose lepidoptery as her pursuit? What are the challenges she faces with this undertaking? How does it suit her personality?
4. Veronica is often faced with choosing between logic and intuition. How does she resolve relying on intuition with her scientific nature?
5. Stoker has many secrets yet to be revealed. What sort of man do you think he truly is?
6. Given the unorthodox nature of their meeting as well as their individual reputations and status, what future do you see for Veronica and Stoker together?
7. Did Veronica make the right choice in the way she handled the truth about her family?
8. Lady Cordelia and Veronica seem to share a bond based partly on their common experiences. What do you think motivates Lady Cordelia? What challenges do both women face as intelligent, motivated women in Victorian society?
9. Describe Veronica's complicated relationship with England.



# About DEANNA RAYBOURN

*Deanna Raybourn*

is the author of the award-winning, *New York Times* bestselling Lady Julia Grey series, currently in development for television, as well as the *USA Today* bestselling and Edgar® Award nominated Veronica Speedwell Mysteries and several standalone works.

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