

*Cleopatra and Frankenstein*  
Coco Mellors

The following questions are intended to enhance your discussion of Coco Mellors's *Cleopatra and Frankenstein*.

### **About This Book**

For readers of *Modern Lovers* and *Conversations with Friends*, an addictive, humorous, and poignant debut novel about the shock waves caused by one couple's impulsive marriage.

Twenty-four-year-old British painter Cleo has escaped from England to New York and is still finding her place in the sleepless city when, a few months before her student visa ends, she meets Frank. Twenty years older and a self-made success, Frank's life is full of all the excesses Cleo's lacks. He offers her the chance to be happy, the freedom to paint, and the opportunity to apply for a green card. But their impulsive marriage irreversibly changes both their lives, and the lives of those close to them, in ways they never could've predicted.

Each compulsively readable chapter explores the lives of Cleo, Frank, and an unforgettable cast of their closest friends and family as they grow up and grow older. Whether it's Cleo's best friend struggling to embrace his gender queerness in the wake of Cleo's marriage, or Frank's financially dependent sister arranging sugar daddy dates to support herself after being cut off, or Cleo and Frank themselves as they discover the trials of marriage and mental illness, each character is as absorbing, and painfully relatable, as the last.

As hilarious as it is heartbreaking, entertaining as it is deeply moving, *Cleopatra and Frankenstein* marks the entry of a brilliant and bold new talent.

### **For discussion**

1. The main characters of the book are Cleo and Frank, and *Cleopatra and Frankenstein* are not their real names. So why is the book called *Cleopatra and Frankenstein*?
2. Each chapter of *Cleopatra and Frankenstein* is told from a different character's point of view. Name some of these characters. How does the changing perspective affect how we read the book?
3. The novel is filled with descriptions of lavish parties and hedonistic behavior. How do these descriptions change as the novel progresses?
4. Cleo is presented in the novel as admired but lonely. What contributes to her loneliness?
5. Is Frank a supportive partner to Cleo? Why or why not?
6. Who is Zoe to Cleo and Frank? Describe their relationships. What drives Zoe to make her decisions throughout the novel?

7. The chapters from Eleanor's point of view are the only ones written in both the first person and fragments. How does this affect how we see her character?
8. As the novel progresses, it becomes increasingly clear that Cleo is depressed. How does she cope with her mental illness? How does Frank? Are these coping mechanisms effective?
9. Cleo and Frank keep some big secrets from each other. How do these secrets affect their relationship?
10. Are Cleo and Frank well suited to each other? Why or why not?
11. Near the end of the novel, Frank gets sober. How is alcoholism presented in the novel? What finally pushes Frank toward sobriety?
12. In the final chapter, Frank visits Cleo in Italy. Describe what happens. How does this ending make us feel? Is it a good ending?

**Books similar to *Cleopatra and Frankenstein***

1. J. Courtney Sullivan — *Saints for All Occasions*
2. Emma Straub — *Modern Lovers*
3. Naoise Dolan — *Exciting Times*
4. Marlowe Granados — *Happy Hour*
5. Sally Rooney — *Conversations with Friends*