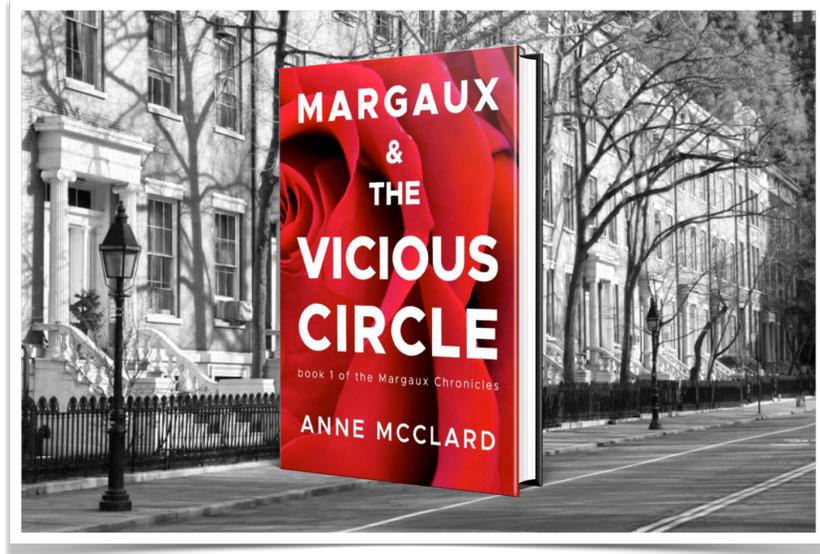


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MARGAUX & THE VICIOUS CIRCLE

READERS' GUIDE FOR BOOK GROUPS

SYNOPSIS

When aspiring author Margaux Andrews receives an unexpected acceptance letter from a literary agency she barely remembers querying, she's drawn into a world where the borders between truth, memory, and imagination begin to blur. Preparing to meet the elusive M. Des Jardins at the storied Algonquin Round Table, Margaux finds herself retracing the unspoken history of her own family—a tangle of silence, loss, and shared magical experiences that everyone has tried to forget.

Set between 1960s Colorado and 1980s New York, *Margaux & the Vicious Circle* is part mystery, a little romance, and magical realism. It explores what happens when old stories—family stories, cultural myths, and personal fictions—start to unravel. As Margaux learns to tell the truth in her own voice, she discovers that the line between invention and honesty isn't as clear as she once believed.

A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR



Anne McClard

Margaux & the Vicious Circle was inspired by my own childhood. The writing of it began after something my mother said as she was dying—that today’s world is so much more dangerous than the one she or I grew up in. The novel that Margaux writes, the novel-within-the-novel, lays out just a few of the dangers my four siblings and I faced during the three years between 1965 and 1968. **Is the world today a more dangerous place?** I’m still not sure. But I do know that the stories we tell about danger—and about survival—shape how we remember the past and how we imagine the future.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

1. *The Invitation*. Talk about the moment Margaux receives the mysterious letter. Did you read it as chance, fate, or something more unsettling? How does that moment set the tone for the rest of the novel?
2. *Memory and Imagination*. The book blurs what’s remembered, imagined, and invented. How does that uncertainty affect your trust in Margaux—or deepen your empathy for her?
3. *Two Worlds*. Margaux & the Vicious Circle moves between 1960s Colorado and 1980s New York. How do those places shape who Margaux becomes and what she’s able—or unable—to face?
4. *Breaking the Circle*. The title points to both the Algonquin Round Table and the cycles of silence within Margaux’s family. Which patterns does she break, and which continue despite her efforts?
5. *The Weight of Silence*. Many characters seem defined by what they don’t say. How does silence operate as both protection and harm throughout the story?
6. *Writing as Mirror*. Margaux’s creative process reflects her search for identity. How does writing help her make sense of herself, and when does it pull her deeper into confusion?
7. *The Glimmer of Magic*. The novel hints at a quiet magical realism—a shimmer at the edge of ordinary life. What moments felt magical to you, and what might that magic symbolize?

8. *Truth and Survival*. By the end, Margaux begins to tell the truth on her own terms. What kind of courage does that take? Do you think the cost was worth it?

KEY THEMES

- The porous boundary between truth and fiction
- Inherited silence and the stories families refuse to tell
- The creative act as both refuge and reckoning
- Nostalgia as both comfort and trap
- The haunting persistence of memory
- The power of art to reveal—and to conceal

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Anne McClard is a writer, songwriter, and anthropologist whose work explores how stories shape memory, identity, and belonging. Her fiction blends elements of magical realism, layered timelines, and emotional honesty. She publishes under *Aristata Press* and shares essays and serialized fiction on Substack and on her personal website.

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