

LONDON CALLING

BY DARBY BAHAM



READER'S GUIDE

The following reading group guide for **London Calling** includes an introduction and discussion questions for enhancing your book club. The suggested questions are intended to help your book club with prompts for discussion, however, they may contain spoilers. I recommend reading the questions only after you have read the book, but I hope they serve to enrich your conversation and increase your enjoyment of it.

INTRODUCTION

London Calling is the third book in Darby Baham's Friendship Chronicles series with Harlequin Special Edition. It is a heartwarming, sometimes steamy story of a young woman trying to believe in love again. Robin Johnson, 30, has a simple life motto: "no convincing and no settling." This has served her well, especially in her career, as she campaigns for and receives a new promotion that takes her to London with dreams of exceeding expectations and finding love in a new country. Within days, she hits the ground running on the job front, and even befriends another successful Black woman in her office, but her luck in dating doesn't go so well. Date after date produces false start after false start, and she's just about to give up on her hopes of finding a partner when she unexpectedly meets her co-worker's charming brother. But after so many disappointments, is she willing to give him a chance ?

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Readers of the first two books in The Friendship Chronicles series (*The Shoe Diaries* and *Bloom Where You're Planted*) will notice one major difference in *London Calling*: most of the encounters with the original friend group take place via text or FaceTime until the end when they come to visit Robin in London. If you were a reader of the other books, how did you feel about me splitting the group up? And have you experienced situations where your closest friends no longer live in the same city or country? How did you all stay close?

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One major theme that runs throughout the book is Robin's fear that she'll end up a successful but lonely woman. It's a common concern among a lot of ambitious women; as they find themselves excelling in their career, they also see their prospects for partnership dwindle. And in Robin's case, the more she dates the wrong men, the harder time she has trusting that she'll meet the right one. Have you ever experienced these kinds of doubts? What, if anything, did you do to remind yourself that you can have both love and a successful career?

London Calling begins with a prologue 8 months before the rest of the story and shows the moment when Robin ends her relationship with the prince she met in Book 1: *The Shoe Diaries*. If you read the previous book, were you sad to see that their relationship didn't work out? And have you ever been in a situation where things are not horrible, but still not necessarily what you want? Did you find it as difficult as Robin to end what you knew in your bones didn't feel right?

Poor Robin, her bad luck in dating just continues after this. She goes on some pretty horrible dates in the beginning of *London Calling*. And just when she thinks her luck has changed, one guy's sister shows up and tells him that a family friend is in love with him. What?! It's easy to see why she might be hesitant to give Craig a chance when they meet at her new friend, Olivia's, apartment, but eventually she does at least try. Were you excited for her to meet Craig after so many false starts or were you, like Robin, giving him the side eye at first too? And have you had any dating experiences similar to the ones she went on?

Once Robin decides to give Craig a shot, he flips the script and asks her to make a deal with him--that she'll be an open book and trust him with all the things she normally keeps inside, like what keeps her up at night, what genuinely makes her laugh, what makes her squirm in good and bad ways, and more. It's a request she's never received before, and she's hesitant at first (again), but agrees before she can talk herself out of it. What did you think of his request? And did you find that he lived up to his part of the deal at all times?

One big aspect of *London Calling* is the city itself! The book is filled with real locations, restaurants, and activities for readers to enjoy if they are in the UK or planning to visit. Have you been to any of the spots mentioned or do you plan to use the book as a new travel guide for the future?

Robin's friends finally join her in London for her birthday, and not a moment too soon--it's right at the time when she needs them to remind her not to give up on love or let her fears convince her that every man is out to betray her.

"No convincing," they say. It's the kick in the butt that she needs to fight for her relationship with Craig, and thankfully, just as she chooses to, she finds him standing at her door. Were you just as excited as she was to see him there in that moment? And have you ever needed your friends to stop you from going down a fear spiral, whether it's about a relationship or anything else?

