



Chocolates for Breakfast

By Pamela Moore
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Introduction

Courtney Farrell is a disaffected, sexually precocious fifteen-year-old. She splits her time between Manhattan, where her father works in publishing, and Los Angeles, where her mother is a still-beautiful Hollywood actress. After a boarding-school crush on a female teacher ends badly, Courtney sets out to learn everything fast. Her first drink is a very dry martini, and her first kiss the beginning of a full-blown love affair with an older man.

A riveting coming-of-age story, *Chocolates for Breakfast* became an international sensation upon its initial publication in 1956, and it still stands out as a shocking and moving account of the way teenagers collide, often disastrously, against love and sex for the first time.

Questions for Discussion

1. Does anyone ever eat chocolate in the book? What kind of breakfasts are actually described? What do you think is the significance of the book's title?
2. Do you see the book as being about a specific time and place, or more universal themes such as coming of age or gender roles in society? Describe how scenes in the book compare or contrast to your own experiences growing up?
3. "Dammit, I am a little girl," Courtney says on p. 14. "And that's what I hate about being with Mummy. It's as though I'm the mother." Is this an accurate description of their relationship? How do children and adults relate to each other throughout the book? What are some ways in which children succeed in getting the adults to pay attention to them?
4. How would you rate Courtney, Janet and Sondra as people you would either want to know, or learn from? Do characters need to be likeable in order for a reader to be engaged by a book?
5. Several writers have compared *Chocolates for Breakfast* to the work of Salinger. Others have pointed out that while Salinger's characters seem to idealize the innocence of childhood, Moore's are rather impatient to grow up. Which viewpoint seems truer to you?
6. *Chocolates for Breakfast* has also been compared to *The Bell Jar*. Although Sylvia Plath's novel appeared seven years after *Chocolates*, both books are set in the same year (1953) and both explore topics that were taboo at the time. Also, both authors died by their own hand, within a year of one another. What do you think are the similarities and differences between these two books?
7. Critics have speculated that Moore suffered from bipolar illness, although diagnosis and treatment for this condition were almost nonexistent at the time. Do you see evidence of such highs and lows in the depiction of Courtney's moods?
8. The novelist Elisa Albert has written: "It's hard to read this book without being influenced by the author's subsequent suicide." Do you agree? Does the background material about Moore's life distract from your reading of the novel or enhance it?
9. Prior to publication in 1956, Moore's manuscript was rejected for serialization by such magazines as *Redbook* and *Ladies Home Journal*. One letter read: "Not right for our magazine or any other. Heroine finds stability but has not been sufficiently punished for her wayward life of sin." Do you think this assessment still holds true for Courtney? How does Janet fit in to the equation?
10. How might this book be read or received differently today as compared to when it was first published?

About the Author

Pamela Moore was an American writer educated at Rosemary Hall and Barnard College. Her first book, *Chocolates for Breakfast*, was published when she was eighteen and became an international bestseller. Moore went on to write four more novels, but none of these enjoyed the success of her first. She died in 1964 at the age of twenty-six, while at work on her final, unpublished novel, *Kathy on the Rocks*.