

Casting Off

by P.I Paris

A few of us really enjoyed the book finding it delightful, funny, light and easy to read. Powerful especially regarding the expression of feelings among the residents. A feel-good book, enjoying the depiction of a happy care home where there was life, humour, misbehaviour, vitality and rebellion.

However, some of us did not enjoy reading Casting Off for a variety of reasons. Some quickly lost interest in the story; others never got into it. Some of the situations being far-fetched. With risqué passages that were not to everybody's taste. A weird book, patchy, badly written for some and too detached from reality. Difficulty to identify with the characters – except for Miss Ross.

Anna summarised it as “a piece of marshmallow” 😊

We were reminded that the book was initially written as a play and not a novel. It certainly felt to me that it was made for the stage. A good, heartwarming farce

The book touched on many themes:

- Friendship
- Individuality
- Independence
- Prejudice and Morality
- Old v Young
- Women's vulnerability and Resilience

Personally, I tried very hard but I just did not enjoy reading the book. It was far too predictable in the numerous developments of the story and its conveniently happy outcomes. It lacked credibility. The various story lines of the book were not convincing: The matron's lack of awareness that something (plotting the protests and the barricading) was in the making. The physical 'agility' of so many residents. The sudden influx of school kids in the care home. Their unlimited interest in being kind and supportive of the elderly. It just did not ring true and made the reading very boring. It felt like reading a not very good book written for children – despite the 'saucy' parts of the book.

But like Margaret, I am glad I read Casting Off and that the book led us to discuss our different responses and opinions, the reasons for our likes and dislikes. We were able to reflect on life in a care home - a topic of interest to us all.

Sabine Deering

6/4/25