Martin County Library System Book Discussion Kit:

The Dead Romantics by Ashley Poston

Included in the Kit:
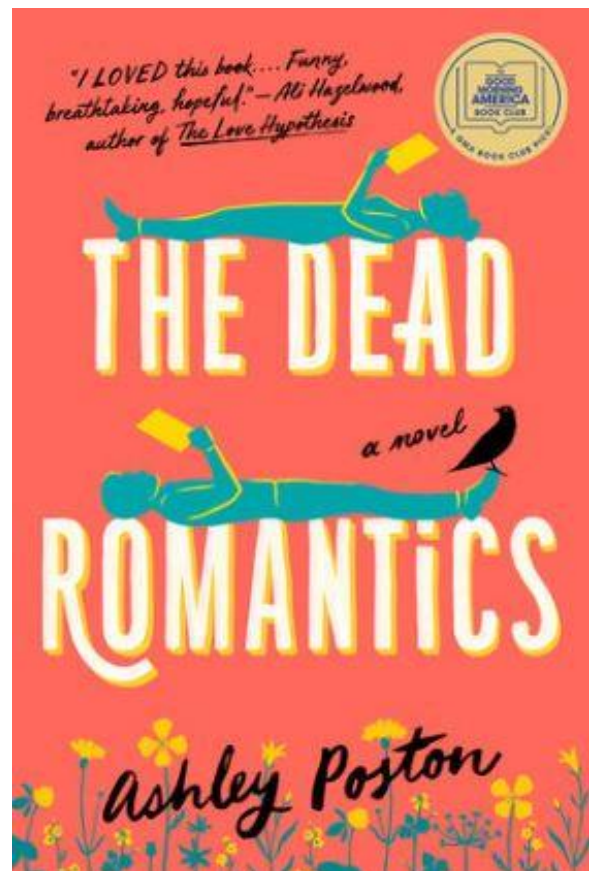- Book summary
- Author biography
- Discussion questions
- Recipe suggestions

Book summary

Florence Day is the ghostwriter for one of the most prolific romance authors in the industry, and she has a problem—after a terrible breakup, she no longer believes in love. It's as good as dead.

When her new editor, a too-handsome mountain of a man, won't give her an extension on her book deadline, Florence prepares to kiss her career goodbye. But then she gets a phone call she never wanted to receive, and she must return home for the first time in a decade to help her family bury her beloved father.

For ten years, she's run from the town that never understood her, and even though she misses the sound of a warm Southern night and her eccentric, loving family and their funeral parlor,

also available to download from Libby

she can't bring herself to stay. Even with her father gone, it feels like nothing in this town has changed. And she hates it.

Until she finds a ghost standing at the funeral parlor's front door, just as broad and infuriatingly handsome as ever, and he's just as confused about why he's there as she is.

Romance is most certainly dead . . . but so is her new editor, and his unfinished business will have her second-guessing everything she's ever known about love stories.

Source: Penguin Random House.
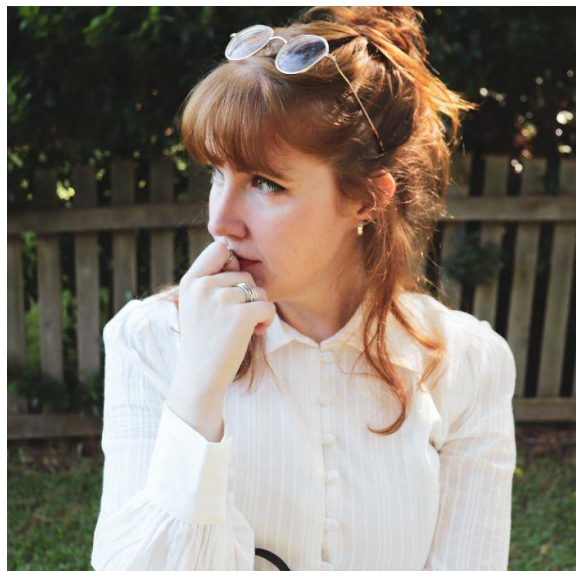(https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/673012/the-dead-romantics-by-ashley-poston/)

Meet the Author

Ashley Poston is the *New York Times* and *USA Today* best-selling author of *The Dead Romantics*, among other novels.

After graduating from the University of South Carolina, she spent ten years in the publishing industry, first as a social media coordinator, then as a book cover and marketing designer, and later as an author. Her novels have been featured on the *Indie Next List, Teen Vogue, Seventeen, EW, CNN, Hypable*, and *Buzzfeed*, among others.

When not writing, she likes trying various arts and crafts (she's currently addicted to building miniature rooms) and taking long walks as an excuse to listen to Dungeons & Dragons podcasts. She lives in South Carolina with her bossy cat, Paprika, and they are firm believers that we're all a bunch of weirdos looking for other weirdos, asking for their AO3 username.

Source: Author's website (https://www.ashposton.com/about)

Discussion Questions

1. Florence is a ghostwriter for Anne Nichols. Do you think books written by ghostwriters are just as important to an author's legacy as those written by the author themselves?

2. Usually, keeping secrets can shake a person's trust in someone else. But Florence's dad kept the secret that he knew who Florence ghostwrote for and had read all of those books. Do you think some secrets can actually build trust once revealed?

3. Throughout the novel, Florence struggles with trying to find the perfect ending. If you could write any sort of happily ever after, how it would go?

4. Both Ben and Florence find comfort in romance novels. What are some of your favorite comfort reads?

5. There are many depictions of afterlives in the media—ghosts, reapers, spirits—from all different cultures. Why do you think the theme of death is so universally explored in stories and the concept of life (or some semblance of it) after death?

6. What is a book you loved that you believe more people should read? What did you love most about it?

7. Death, and how a person handles it, is a big part of the novel. If you could leave a list behind for your loved ones, like Xavier does in the story, what would be on it?

8. If Ben and Florence were put in a punderdome, who do you think would win? Kidding—but in truth, do you think humor and tragedy go hand in hand? Why or why not?

9. Do you feel Lee Marlow was justified in writing When the Dead Sing? Do you think original ideas exist? Or do we all pull inspiration—knowingly or not—from the experiences we've had and the people we've met throughout our lives?

Recipes

Virgin Manhattan Mocktail Recipe

- 2 ounces cranberry juice
- 2 ounces orange juice
- 1 teaspoon maraschino cherry juice
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- 2 dashes Angostura bitters
- 2 Maraschino cherries

Add all ingredients, except the cherries, to a cocktail shaker and then fill the shaker with ice.

Cover and shake well.

Strain the drink into two martini glasses.

Garnish with the cherries and enjoy cold.

Source: "Virgin Manhattan Mocktail Recipe." Mocktail" (https://mocktail.net/virgin-manhattan-mocktail)

Pigs In Coffins

- 6 sheets puff pastry, partially thawed
- 400g cocktail franks
- 1 free range egg, lightly beaten
- 1/2 cup tomato sauce, to serve

Preheat oven to 200°C/180°C fan-forced and line a baking tray with baking paper. Cut each sheet of pastry into four equal squares.

Take one square of puff pastry and place a cocktail frank on top. Cover with another square of puff pastry and press gently to seal.

Cut each parcel into a coffin shape with two short, angled cuts at the top corners and two long, angled cuts at the bottom corners. Reserve offcuts and cut into very thin strips. Bend and trim the offcuts to write RIP on the coffin lids, pressing the letters gently into the pastry coffins.

Use a fork to press down on the outer edges of the coffin shape to seal. Place coffins on the prepared tray and brush lightly with beaten egg. Bake in the oven for 20 minutes or until golden. Serve alongside (bloody!) tomato sauce.

Source: "Pigs in Coffins." Woolworth.
(https://www.woolworths.com.au/shop/recipes/pigs-in-coffins)