

Love Object

Sally Cooper

About the Book

Love Object by Sally Cooper is a sensuous novel about escape and the ways people search for freedom from ordinary lives. Mercy Brewer, a teenager growing up in the early 1980s, is trying to understand the mystery of her missing mother, Sylvia, whose breakdown Mercy witnessed five years earlier.

Featuring a collection of engaging characters, *Love Object* smoothly weaves together two pivotal summers in Mercy Brewer's life. At the heart of this compelling narrative is the lucid voice of dreamy, imaginative Mercy, whose coming of age is visceral and chaotic, full of the complexities of mother-child relations, growing bewilderment with one's body, self-doubt, and sexual awakening.

Suggested Questions for Discussion

1. The novel explores what happens in a family when one member falls down. How do Mercy, Nicky and Sam each respond to Sylvia's madness? What do their responses to Sylvia's madness reveal about them?
2. When Mercy is sent to summer camp, her experiences are complicated and painful. What role (if any) do you think she plays in what occurs? What is the novel suggesting about girls and power? Why do you think teenage girls bully one another? Have you experienced bullying yourself?
3. Vi is a non-traditional grandmother: bawdy, outspoken, human. How does her presence heal or harm the family? How does she reconcile herself to her own sins?
4. Mercy describes her mother, Sylvia, as "the one without history, without future." What do you think happened to Sylvia in the end? Why do you think the author would make Sylvia's fate deliberately ambiguous? Is there any grace here?
5. What is the significance of the book's title? What is the title (and the novel) saying about desire and its many forms?
6. What do Sylvia's clothes represent to Nicky? How does her absence contribute to his emerging identity?
7. Mercy has been described as "resolutely adolescent – mercurial, yearning, overtly sexual, and confused." In what ways is *Love Object* a coming-of-age story? How has Mercy changed by the end of the novel?

Praise

"A genuine fiction talent."

D.M. Thomas

"Cooper possesses an extraordinary eye for detail, describing objects and settings with precise and often beautiful language. In a series of deft strokes, she reveals her characters' internal lives with sensitivity and imagination, inducing empathy in the reader. Under Cooper's skilful guidance, Mercy's longing for her mother, and ultimate rejection of her, seem believable and necessary...brilliantly rendered."

Quill and Quire

"*Love Object* is a powerful debut for Sally Cooper. She clearly is a fearless writer, not afraid to make us squirm as she lays out stark details that expose and enrich her characters. Her passionate commitment to her characters drives the novel and the reader relentlessly forward. We have to know how it turns out. A young writer to watch."

Ottawa Citizen

"The most touching, sensual and deeply discerned portrayal of a boy's erotic self_discovery that I've ever read – a few paragraphs of luminous perfection. [Her] ending is the jewelled clasp that...pins down her themes, and deftly rewards the reader's indulgence."

The Globe and Mail

"As in a David Lynch movie, there is more to this small town than meets the eye...some deliciously surreal moments and characters. [This] debut is not to be missed."

Robyn Gillam *Amazon.ca*

"[a] fresh talent on the Canadian writing scene. A very good depiction of the textures of everyday life. I can feel the terry cloth pyjamas on this character."

Hot Type – CBC Newsworld

"With its lush language, *Love Object* resonates through the senses. Sally Cooper is a talent to watch."

In the Hills

Love Object was a Crack Panel Book Selection for Hot Type on *CBC Newsworld* and Book-of-the Month at *Chatelaine.com*.