

The Lively Penelope Lively

In her 85 years Penelope Lively has written 45 books and is currently at work on number 46. She was born in Cairo, Egypt, in 1933, where her father was a British official in pre-war Egypt. As the battles of World War II grew closer to Cairo and after a domestic upheaval, Penelope and her father returned to England, where she was sent to boarding school. Her memories of those early years in Cairo are captured in one of her memoirs, *Oleander Jacaranda*, in vivid detail. She married and had two children and wrote constantly. Lively is the author of 3 memoirs, 1 work of nonfiction, 18 novels, 5 collections of short stories, and 18 children's books. For her 1987 novel, *Moon Tiger*, she won the Booker Prize, Britain's highest literary award, as well as winning Britain's highest award for children's literature. Additional honors include membership in the Royal Society of Literature, PEN, the Society of Authors, and recognition as a Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire.

Lively's novels are characterized by engaging characters, her wry and incisive wit, and the role chance encounters and their consequences play in human affairs. In this course we will read *Moon Tiger*, which is narrated by a dying woman remembering her complicated, absorbing life spent partly in Egypt during World War II, as well as her most recent book, *The Purple Swamp Hen and Other Stories*. *Moon Tiger* covers a lifetime with all its challenges, losses, and richness of experience. The short story collection is funny, ironic, and varied. In both books Lively's insight into the complexities of human experience and emotion and her skill in creating memorable characters weave compelling narratives.

Participants should anticipate reading between 80 and 100 pages for each class.

Paperback copies of both books are available from Barnes and Noble, Labyrinth Books, and Amazon. This will be a seminar-style course based on discussion with some introductory lectures. No preparation is necessary before the first class except to purchase the books. If you know Penelope Lively's work, this will be an opportunity to explore two books in depth. If she's new to you, these two books will provide a stimulating introduction to a literary banquet.

Leader: Lynne Cullinane has taught several courses for the Evergreen Forum, a continuation of a lifelong career of teaching and learning about literature.

Wednesdays: 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m., 6 weeks: February 27 through April 3

Location: The Presbyterian Church of Lawrenceville