The Course of Love: a novel by Alain de Botton

- Hardcover: 240 pages
- Publisher: Simon & Schuster (June 14, 2016)
- Language: English
- ISBN-10: 1501134256

About the Book

In Edinburgh, a couple, Rabih and Kirsten, fall in love. They get married. They have children. Society tells us this is the end of the story. In fact, it is only the beginning.

From the author of Essays in Love comes the long-awaited and beguiling sequel, which charts the complex and intricate course of a long-term relationship.

We all know the headiness and excitement of love’s early days, but what can be expected over a shared lifetime? We follow our couple – Rabih and Kirsten – from the first flush of infatuation through to inevitable disenchantedments and then onto the freedom and insights of maturity. The Course of Love is a novel that explores not so much the start of love, as its maintenance over time; the way our ideals bend and reform under the pressures of an average existence, and the magnificent, sometimes frightening, developments we can make as we slowly realise that love is in essence a skill we need to learn rather than an enthusiasm we simply experience.

Playful, wise, and profoundly moving, The Course of Love is an unparalleled meditation on modern relationships —and a delightful return to the novel for Alain, more than 20 years after Essays in Love.

(From the Author’s website http://alaindebotton.com/the-course-of-love/)
About the Author

Alain de Botton was born in Zurich, Switzerland in 1969 and now lives in London. He is a writer of essayistic books that have been described as a ‘philosophy of everyday life.’ He’s written on love, travel, architecture and literature. His books have been bestsellers in 30 countries. Alain also started and helps to run a school in London called The School of Life, dedicated to a new vision of education. Alain’s latest book, published in April 2016, is titled The Course of Love.

Alain started writing at a young age. His first book, Essays in Love [titled On Love in the US], was published when he was twenty-three. It minutely analysed the process of falling in and out of love, in a style that mixed elements of a novel together with reflections and analyses normally found in a piece of non-fiction. It’s a book of which many readers are still fondest and it has sold two million copies worldwide. (...)

A lot of Alain’s time is spent running The School of Life, in particular authoring pieces for its YouTube channel www.youtube.com/theschooloflifetv and for www.thebookoflife.org/ a curated collection of the best and most helpful ideas in the area of emotional life.

Book Reviews

“The Course of Love is a return to the form that made Mr. de Botton’s name in the mid-1990s.... love is the subject best suited to his obsessive aphorizing, and in this novel he again shows off his ability to pin our hopes, methods and insecurities to the page.”
—The New York Times

“[De Botton] analyzes Rabih's feelings, especially, with the finesse of a therapist—and in fact there is more than a whiff of the couch in this exemplary tale...Readers looking for insights and guidance will find plenty.”
—NPR

“The course of true love may not run smooth, but the storytelling certainly does in this wise, humane and irresistibly readable history of an appealingly nuanced relationship. De Botton deftly moves us through time, weaving in philosophical interludes that showcase his essayistic gifts, so that before we know it we have lived a whole life with these two, and they are just getting started. De Botton directs his ferocious intelligence at the most complex puzzle of all, and it seems that no intellectual or emotional problem surpasses his ability to solve it.”
—Matthew Thomas, New York Times bestselling author of We Are Not Ourselves

“The Course of Love is a complete delight. Not surprisingly, I feel that Alain de Botton not only wrote it for me, but also that we must have been conversing on these subjects happily and deeply, privately or in my dreams.”
—Amy Bloom, New York Times bestselling author of Away and Lucky Us
Discussion Questions

1. What makes this book distinctive?
2. What is the difference between Rabih and Kirsten's views of love at the start and at the end of the story?
3. What does the author mean by 'Romanticism' throughout the book?
4. In what way is Rabih hard to live with?
5. In what way is Kirsten hard to live with?
6. What do the characters gradually learn about one another?
7. Can a good novel be didactic? If not, why not?
8. Does the division into action and italicized commentary work?
9. What are the immature patterns of behavior that make love hard for our couple?
10. What is mature love?

(Questions provided by the Author and issued by Monterey County Free Libraries of California. Please feel free to use them, online or off, with attribution. Thanks.)