# My Year of Rest and Relaxation by Ottessa Moshfegh

## Synopsis

Our narrator should be happy, shouldn't she?

She's young, thin, pretty, a recent Columbia graduate, works an easy job at a hip art gallery, lives in an apartment on the Upper East Side of Manhattan paid for, like the rest of her needs, by her inheritance. But there is a dark and vacuous hole in her heart, and it isn't just the loss of her parents, or the way her Wall Street boyfriend treats her, or her sadomasochistic relationship with her best friend, Reva.

It's the year 2000 in a city aglitter with wealth and possibility; what could be so terribly wrong?

My Year of Rest and Relaxation is a powerful answer to that question. Through the story of a year spent under the influence of a truly mad combination of drugs designed to heal our heroine from her alienation from this world, Moshfegh shows us how reasonable, even necessary, alienation can be.

## Discussion questions

1. What do you think of our narrator? Is she mentally ill? Or is she the sanest character you've ever come across in literature? Perhaps she's something in between.
2. On the surface, our narrator seems to have it all—good looks, money, education, and a Manhattan apartment. What then is her reason for wanting to sleep the year away? Her motive isn't suicide, so what is she trying to escape … or find?
3. Talk about the state of the world (at least in the U.S) during the year the narrator is checking out; how does the author portray the era? We know that 9/11 is around the corner. Why might the author have chosen to set her story in this particular time, in New York City, and right before the World Trade Center cataclysm? In what way does your knowledge of what is to come (9/11) affect your reading experience or your understanding of the book?
4. Did some (many?) of the narrator's observations and quips ("Caffeine was my exercise") get you laughing? How would you describe her type of humor?
5. If you were Reva, the narrator's friend, what would you do or say to the narrator? What do you make of Reva?
6. Toward the end, the narrator does experience a transformation. She attends the Metropolitan Museum of Art and begins to re-engage. Talk about the nature of that change. How has she been altered?
7. Despite the museum guard's warning to step back, the narrator reaches out to touch the canvass of a painting. Why is touching so important?

*Discussion questions from https://www.litlovers.com/reading-guides/13-reading-guides/fiction/11346-my-year-of-rest-relaxation-moshfegh?showall=1*