

the mother in me

Real World Reflections on Growing into Motherhood

Book Club Guide

These questions may help encourage discussion about some of the motherhood themes included in *the mother in me*. Group leaders may add other questions to reflect or enhance individual group dynamics. Writing prompts are also included to encourage participants to write about their own mothering experiences. For information about scheduling a contributing author to visit your book group, please send an email to bookclubvisits@gmail.com. Additional information about this book, including author bios and reader reviews, is available at www.themotherinme.com.

1. Loss is a common theme in *the mother in me*. What do these women lose as they mother? What do they gain? What have you lost and gained as a mother?
2. How do the themes of guilt and grace place out in the other essays and poems? What are the sources of each?
3. "This is harder than I thought it would be..." Which essays speak on that theme? Do you feel that they also say "...and also better than I thought"? Is the balance of "this is really hard" and "this is also worth it" realistic for you? How has your own mothering reflected these ideas?
4. What are some difficult subjects for mothers to talk about? Is there fear or shame attached to the subject? How can we learn to better communicate and support each other?
5. Read "Big Brother" and "That One in the Middle" and discuss the challenges of adding children to a family for both mothers and older siblings.
6. Read "we all hate to be alone" and discuss the lines "this is how we shut one another out,/lost in a maelstrom of dissatisfaction." How do feelings of aloneness and dissatisfaction threaten the positives of motherhood? What are some ways to alleviate those feelings?
7. This is a book written about mothering young children, from pregnancy to five years. If you have older children, how has your experience mothering changed as your children have grown? What piece do you most wish you had had as a new/young mother? What piece(s) would you most want a new/young mother to read? Why?
8. Several of the authors explore the disappointment that comes with not having the family they imagined. Has your family turned out the way that you planned? If not, how do you handle the disappointment of not being in control of this part of your life?
9. How are some of the greatest joys of motherhood attached to the greatest trials? How is this idea related to the "old truth" referred to at the end of "The Yoke of Wisdom"?
10. Discuss the line, "There's freedom in the bleeding;/bondage in the milk" from the poem "Blood and Milk." Are there any freedoms that come with choosing those "tender chains"?

11. Which piece resonated most with your own mothering experience? What do you feel the value is in sharing experiences with others?

Writing Prompts

After reading “Since You Were Born,” spend five minutes finishing this thought: Since my kids were born, I’ve...

Reflect on your own mothering experiences and write briefly about two or more that could become an essay or poem.

Write for five minutes about someone who has inspired you to become a better mother.

Think of a topic, such as grace, freedom, or growth, and frame an experience within that concept.

Read the opening paragraphs of “Watch With Me” and think about how writing can help us to savor the grains of life’s experiences. Write about a memory or image of your children and include as much detail as possible.

*To inquire about having a contributing author visit your book club,
please send an email to bookclubvisits@gmail.com.*