



The Shoemaker's Wife

By Adriana Trigiani
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Questions for Discussion

1. The novel is split into three parts: Italian Alps, Manhattan and Minnesota. How would you characterize *Ciro* and *Enza* in each of these sections? How do they adapt to their new homes? In what ways did they change over the course of the novel? In what ways did they remain the same?
2. How would the course of both *Ciro's* and *Enza's* lives have been different if they hadn't gone to America? Do you think they would have ended up together if they had stayed on the mountain?
3. *Enza* and *Ciro* shared their first kiss beside *Stella's* grave. In what ways did digging the grave open up *Ciro's* heart?
4. When *Ciro* opened up his duffle bag on the ship to America, "the fragrance of the convent laundry lavender and starch enveloped him, fresh as the mountain air of Vilminore" (p. 120). What other aspects of convent life stayed with *Ciro* and *Eduardo* after they left? What did they learn from the sisters?
5. *Enza* "found a best friend in *Laura*, but so much more" (p. 195). What do you think made *Laura* and *Enza's* bond so deep from the beginning? In what ways did they support one another?
6. Did anything surprise you about the characterization of *Enrico Caruso*? How would you describe his relationship with those around him? How did the time he spent with *Enza* and *Laura* affect them, even decades later?
7. How does *The Shoemaker's Wife* portray the immigrant experience? Do any of your own families have a similar immigrant history? Did they have a different experience?
8. *Enza* and *Ciro* have different views of religion. In what ways do their beliefs shape their actions and relationship?
9. How do you think *Enza's* life would have turned out if she had married *Vito*? If *Ciro* had married *Felicit'*? What did *Vito* and *Felicit'* offer them and what did they lack?
10. *Carlo Lazzari* warned *Eduardo* to "beware the things of this world that can mean everything or nothing". In what ways did this advice ring true throughout the novel?
11. What effect did fighting in the Great War have on *Ciro*? Do you believe he returned to Manhattan a changed man, or did the war just force him to acknowledge what he had known all along?
12. When *Ciro* saw *Enza* on the steps of *Our Lady of Pompeii* church, moments away from marrying *Vito*, "it seemed like fate was on his side." Do you believe that fate brought *Ciro* and *Enza* together on that day? Overall, do you believe that *Ciro* and *Enza* were destined to be together?
13. *Enza* once said to *Ciro*: "I remind you, I imagine, of things you'd rather not think about." What do you believe *Enza* meant by this? What challenges did *Ciro* and *Enza* face in their relationship? How did they differ in their ways of communicating?
14. How did *Ciro*, *Enza* and *Antonio* each react to *Ciro's* diagnosis? What were *Ciro's* fears and hopes for his family? In what ways will *Enza* and *Antonio* fulfill his dreams?
15. At the end of the novel, *Enza* agrees to return to Italy with *Antonio* and *Angela*. How do you imagine the reunion between *Enza* and her family? How will *Schilpario* be different for *Enza* when seen through *Angela* and *Antonio's* eyes?