

***WHATEVER... LOVE IS LOVE* READING GROUP GUIDE**

Questions for Discussion:

1. *Whatever... Love Is Love* is about finding out who we are beyond the labels others put on us. Maria Bello poses a series of questions to herself, questions that she uses to explore her life and everything in it. Which of her questions resonate with you? What are some "labels" that define you and where did they originate? Do they fit your life and the person you see in the mirror? How can we get beyond these labels?
2. What are the qualities that make a partner for you? Who are some of your partners and what do they bring to your life?
3. From reading the book, how does faith, family, work, love, and humanitarianism blend in Maria's life? And in your own?
4. Maria's friend from college, Father Ray, taught her about living a worthy life. What does it mean to be worthy? How can we be worthy, and make a difference to others' in our busy daily lives?
5. In talking about her father, Maria explores the notion of forgiveness, which she defines as acceptance. How does her definition fit with your own ideas of forgiveness? What do we need to do to truly forgive another?
6. Maria discusses the idea of moving from one phase to another in our lives. Why do so many people fear change? How do you handle transitions? How might you approach the next change in your life and how might it be different from previous experiences?
7. What significance does Haiti hold for Maria? How have her experiences in Haiti affected her? Do you have a "Haiti" in your own life? If so, how has it impacted who you are? Do you think it is selfish to be a "humanitarian"?
8. Maria also explores feminism. What is a feminist? Do you think of yourself as a feminist? How has feminism changed over the past 40 years?
9. Maria reveals how her mother is very influenced by her Catholic faith, and one of its most revered symbols, the Virgin Mary. She also talks about appreciating signs in her own life, specifically in the form of a gold shoe she once found. "Signs are everywhere," Maria tells us. How can we open ourselves to receive signs like these as messages from the universe?
10. If you are familiar with Maria Bello from her work as an actor, how did reading the book affect your perceptions of her? What did you learn about her as a mother, an actor, a daughter, a friend, a partner? Did reading the book help you see your own life differently?

11. Maria had a number of ordinary yet remarkable people who helped her see and be herself throughout her life, and mentioned books that have touched her. What people have shaped the person you are? Do you have favorite books or movies that have transformed you as well?

12. Would you call *Whatever . . . Love Is Love* a memoir? Did you get a full picture of Maria the person from reading the book? What expectations did you have before you read *Whatever . . . Love Is Love*? Did the book surprise you or challenge you? What did you take away from reading it?