



BOOK CLUB KIT

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Traditional Russian nesting dolls are carved, wooden figures where each doll fits inside a larger one. How does the title of the book relate to its themes? How do the choices made by Daria affect Natasha and later Zoe?
2. Julia tells Zoe that in the Soviet Union what you really thought had nothing to do with what you publicly said. How does this philosophy explain some of the choices Daria and Natasha make? How might Daria and Natasha's lives have been different if they'd lived in societies where every word and action didn't carry such potentially dire consequences? How is their caution reflected in Zoe? How does she rebel against this?
3. What are some examples of "the right man at the right time" versus the wrong man? How does the concept of a hero change depending on time and place? Who was Daria's hero? Who was Natasha's? Who was Zoe's?
4. Does Adam take advantage of Daria's desperation and fear for Edward? Does that change how you feel about Adam, moving forward? Is he a hero or a villain?
5. Based on the Alyssa we meet as Natasha's mother and Zoe's great-grandmother, what kind of mother do we think Daria turned out to be? How was she affected by her deportation and survival in Siberia? Why does she tell Zoe, "Sometimes no choice, it is the best choice." What does this mean for Daria? What does it mean for Natasha?
6. Why does Natasha agree with her mother's suggestion that she looks sick and should stay home? Did she ever intend to go with Dima? Was Natasha ever serious about the refusenik movement? Was Natasha lying to Dima or to herself?

QUESTIONS CONTINUED . . .

7. Do you think Dima truly cares for Natasha, or was he just using her? Did he suspect she wasn't as dedicated as the rest? Does he truly not remember her years later?
8. Why is Zoe so determined to make her relationship with Alex work? What is she trying to convince herself of? Is this the same or different from Natasha and Dima?
9. Why does Alex, who claims to have no time or interest in meeting Zoe's family, nonetheless put on a show for them when they visit and seems determined to make them like him? Why is Alex interested in Zoe? Is he actually interested in her?
10. How does Gideon offer Zoe a new way to look at her relationship with her family? How does his relationship with his own family contribute to that?
11. Why isn't love a potato? Why does *The Nesting Dolls* open and close with the image of one?

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