

When You See Her Book Club Kit



**BARBARA
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Book Club Questions

1. *When You See Her* is set in the late 1970s. When the book opens, we find out that the main character weighs 500 pounds. How different or unusual was that for the time period, and how do you think it would be perceived today? How have societal views of overweight people changed and how have they stayed the same?
2. Growing up, Lola had a close relationship with her father. How did that benefit her and how did it hurt her? If her father had lived, what do you think would have happened to Lola? To her brother, Jared? To Mrs. Schendel?
3. In speaking of Jared's death, Mrs. Schendel says:
It's tragic actually because he was a young man who could have lived for a long time yet. And he could have had many experiences that might have changed him, maybe for better, maybe for worse. We'll never know.

Would Jared have changed for the better if given the opportunity? Did you empathize with him and his circumstances at any point?
4. Though Mrs. Schendel acts as her surrogate mother, Lola delays reuniting with her and withholds information about her life. Why do you think Lola does that?
5. When Lola runs away with the carnival, she joins a closed community with its own rules and values. What do you think they are and how do they differ from those of society in general?
6. Gigi is the first friend Lola has ever had. How would you describe their loyalty to each other? What about the give and take between them? Do you think its equivalent?

7. Lola and Jim begin an immediate romantic relationship her first night with the carnival. Do you think that Jim takes advantage of her situation?
8. Despite his untraditional views on relationships, Jim holds Lola in esteem as his "old lady." At times, Lola wonders why he feels that way. What do you think motivates Jim?
9. Jim blames television for the demise of sideshows. Do you agree? Is there something inherent to human nature that makes us want to view unusual bodies or actions? Has society moved beyond that or has the sideshow been replaced with something else?
10. Hinkle describes some of the problems facing the sideshow, as follows:
The fact of the matter is that the sideshow doesn't bring in money like it used to. It seems that a bunch of upstanding citizens have decided that there's something bad or wrong about displaying freaks for money. Now, what these shit-for-brains do-gooders think freaks should do instead or where they should work is a complete mystery.

What do you think about this point of view? Is Hinkle giving work to the otherwise unemployable or exploiting a vulnerable group of people? How much does the willingness and consent of the sideshow performers shape your ideas about this?

11. As a large person on display for an audience, Lola feels both visible and invisible. Do other characters experience this same paradox and how do they navigate it?
12. Lola, Jim, and Gigi all suffer from essential flaws and compulsions, which they seem unable or unwilling to change or eliminate. How does this affect their lives? Why do you think the author chose to have them retain these characteristics?



About the Author

Barbara Boehm Miller likes to write about secret societies and marginalized people and to create desperate and unsavory characters, who, nonetheless, appeal to readers. She earned a Master of Arts in writing from Johns Hopkins University and has had several short fiction pieces published in literary journals.

Barbara has also worked for many years as a translator of Romance languages into English and has published a series of translations, primarily in the field of children's rights. She has lived in Costa Rica, France, Mexico, and Spain and, at present, serves as a senior diplomatic translator for the U.S. Department of State.

When not writing, reading, or working, Barbara likes to spend time with her inspiring husband and twin daughters, and her sweet brown dog.