



# Book Club in a Bag

## Discussion Questions

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### *Lessons in Chemistry* by Bonnie Garmus

1. Elizabeth Zott had no formal education, and yet she was able to self-educate, thanks to her library card. With the advent of technology, the library almost seems outdated, though many would argue that the library is more important than ever. Do you think libraries are important? If so, why?
2. Why does Elizabeth always wear a pencil in her hair? Is it a weapon or is it a symbol of strength?
3. Elizabeth refuses to accept limits placed on her by society and insists that others also ignore those limits. How do each of those characters ultimately rise to that challenge? And in what ways have you or others been limited by societal norms?
4. The book includes male characters who are sympathetic to Elizabeth's plight, and yet, except for Calvin and Dr. Mason, have trouble standing up for women or other minorities in the workplace. Why do good-hearted people have trouble speaking up? And what are the consequences of not speaking up?
5. Harriet Sloane is an inveterate magazine reader. How do magazines and media shape our culture? And what did Harriet mean when she first told Elizabeth to "recommit"? Is there some dream of yours that you wish you would recommit to?
6. Friendship and family are interconnected themes in the book. Can friendships sometimes provide family better than family itself? Walter isn't Amanda's biological father, but he loves her fully and is the most present person in her life. On the other hand, Avery Parker still loves the son she never knew. How do you define family?
7. Madeline fills her family tree with Sojourner Truth, Amelia Earhart, and Nefertiti to point out that all humans are related. But if humans are 99.9 percent the same, why do we treat each other so differently?

The above questions were taken from  
<https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/677234/lessons-in-chemistry-by-bonnie-garmus/9780385547345/readers-guide/>  
to enhance your discussion of the book.

# Author Biography

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Bonnie Garmus is a copywriter and creative director who has worked widely in the fields of technology, medicine, and education. She's an open-water swimmer, a rower, and mother to two daughters. Born in California and most recently from Seattle, she currently lives in London with her husband and her dog, 99.

<https://www.bonniegarmus.com/about>

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