



Book Club in a Bag

Discussion Questions

Inheritance by Dani Shapiro

1. What is the significance of the title? What does it mean, in the context of the memoir?
2. Shapiro chose two quotes for her epigraph, one from Sylvia Plath and the other from George Orwell. What do they mean individually, and how do they affect your understanding of the other?
3. Chapter 7 opens with a discussion of the nature of identity: “What combination of memory, history, imagination, experience, subjectivity, genetic substance, and that ineffable thing called the soul makes us who we are?” What do you believe makes you, you?
4. Shapiro follows that passage with another provocative question: “Is who we are the same as who we believe ourselves to be?” What’s your opinion?
5. All her life, people had been telling Shapiro she didn’t look Jewish. If this hadn’t been part of her life already, how do you think she might have reacted to the news from her DNA test?
6. After Shapiro located her biological father, she emailed him almost immediately, against the advice of her friend, a genealogy expert. What do you imagine you would have done?
7. Why was it so important to Shapiro to believe that her parents hadn’t known the truth about her conception?
8. What do you make of the similarities between Shapiro and her half sister Emily?
9. Shapiro ends her book with a meditation on the Hebrew word Hineni, “Here I am.” Why is this phrase so powerful?

The above questions were taken from
<https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/554262/inheritance-by-dani-shapiro/9781524732714/readers-guide/> to enhance your discussion of the book.

Author Biography

Dani Shapiro lives in Litchfield County, Connecticut. She has taught at Columbia and New York University. In February 2019, she launched series of podcasts called *Family Secrets* in collaboration with iHeartMedia.

<https://danishapiro.com/contact-bio/>

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