



# Book Club in a Bag

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## *Island of Sea Women* by Lisa See

1. The Haenyeo are respected for having a matrifocal culture—a society of women. They work hard, have many responsibilities and earn money but how much independence and power within their families do they really have?
2. The story begins with Young-sook as an old woman, gathering algae on the beach. What secrets or clues about the past and the present are revealed in the scenes that take place in 2008? Why do we understand the beginning of the novel only after we have finished it?
3. Mi-ja's rubbings are critical to the novel. How do they illustrate the friendship between Mi-ja and Young-sook? How do they help Young-sook in her process of healing?
4. On page 39, Young-sook's mother recites the aphorism "If you plant red beans, then you will harvest red beans". Jun-bu repeats the phrase on page 199. How do these two characters interpret the saying? How does this saying play out for various characters?
5. Are the main characters dynamic, changing or maturing by the end of the book? What do they learn about themselves, the world, and their role in it?
6. At first it would seem that the visit of the scientists to the island is something of a digression. What important consequences does the visit have for Young-sook and the other haenyeo?
7. Which character did you relate to the most, and what was it about them that you connected with?
8. What is life like for men married to haenyeo? Compare Young-sook's father, Mi-ja's husband, and Young-sook's husband.
9. Has this novel changed you or broadened your perspective? Have you learned something new or been exposed to different ideas about people or a certain part of the world?

The above questions were taken from <https://www.litlovers.com/reading-guides/fiction/11513-island-of-sea-women-see?start=3> to enhance your discussion of the book.

# Author Biography

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Lisa See is a *New York Times* bestselling author. She is also authored *On Gold Mountain*, which tells the story of her Chinese American family's settlement in Los Angeles. Her books have been published in 39 languages. See was the recipient of the Golden Spike Award from the Chinese Historical Association of Southern California and the History Maker's Award from the Chinese American Museum.

<https://www.lisasee.com/about-lisa-see/short-biography/>

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