



# Book Club in a Bag

## Discussion Questions

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### *The Only Woman in the Room* by Marie Benedict

1. The title of the novel is subject to several interpretations. What meanings can you glean from the title, and how did your understanding of the meaning change from the beginning of the novel to the end, if at all?
2. Hedy's father expresses concern for his daughter's welfare in the wake of Hitler's desire to annex their home country, Austria, to the overtly anti-Semitic Germany. Hedy views this as a problem faced by the Ostjuden, but not for the fully assimilated Jewish people like her and her family. Did her initial reaction surprise you, and if so, do you think modern-day readers would find her response disconcerting thanks to the benefit of hindsight? How do you think you might have acted in this time period?
3. As a very young woman, Hedy marries one of the richest men in Austria: the munitions manufacturer Fritz Mandl. How did you feel about her encounters with high-ranking Austrian, Italian, and Nazi political figures as Mrs. Mandl? How did her beauty make her both noticed by these men and invisible to them? What impact do these experiences have on her later life?
4. Despite their conflicted relationship, Hedy struggles to bring her mother from war-torn Austria to America and only finds success because of the connections garnered by her fame. What was your reaction to Hedy's mother's initial resistance to leaving?
5. Would you be surprised to learn that Hedy's invention became the basis, in part, for the creation of Wi-Fi technology? Please discuss the fact that her contribution to this world-changing innovation was largely lost, or ignored, for decades.
6. How might Hedy have symbolic importance in our time? Do you think it is important to uncover the voices and stories of historical women?

The above questions were taken from  
<https://www.readinggroupguides.com/reviews/the-only-woman-in-the-room/guide>  
to enhance your discussion of the book.

# Author Biography

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Marie Benedict is a graduate of Boston College with a focus in History and Art History. She graduated from the Boston University School of Law and has been a practising lawyer for ten years. While practising law, she always dreamed of writing about historical stories of women, which led her to her writing career.

<http://www.authormariebenedict.com/about-marie.html>

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