

All My Mother's Lovers by Ilana Masad

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & PROMPTS

Please see below for questions that we'll use to loosely guide our discussion on January 23rd.

- ✚ Would you recommend this book to others? Why or why not?
- ✚ The novel uses objects, such as the jewelry and letters, and characters' relations to them as a plot device. Why do humans care about what is done with the objects of the recently deceased? Did you find this portrayal effective? How did the context of these objects make them special?
 - "And the necklace. What is that, [Maggie] thinks, some kind of pity gift? She knows it was her grandmother's, but it's nothing special, just a stone and chain without a story. She never even saw Bubby wearing it, Maggie thinks, bitterness rising in her esophagus. Just an arbitrary good-luck charm her mother wore on trips, a charm that failed spectacularly during Iris's last and extremely brief one. It's so *gendered* too, Maggie fumes, like what, boys can't wear necklaces? But no, apparently, the big, obviously expensive rings are for Ariel to bestow upon his future boring bride so he can have future boring kids in boring suburbia." (58)
- ✚ Take a moment to think about an object or piece of writing of yours that will endure after you are gone. Think about what will happen to that object, who will come across it. With that in mind, how do you regard Maggie's decision to hand-deliver the letters?
- ✚ The themes of secrecy and privacy come up frequently in the text. Where is the line between the two? When does Maggie cross that line?
- ✚ Are the letters a romantic gesture? Was it fair of Iris to send them in the event of her death?
- ✚ Maggie is in some ways presented as very mature, with a stable job in a stereotypically boring industry. How does the author start to challenge that maturity? To whom or what does Maggie feel responsible? How does that change? Do you consider this a coming-of-age novel?
- ✚ How does generational tension play out? Where in the text do you see that? What forms does it take? How central are those tensions to the storytelling?
- ✚ What else might have prompted Maggie to learn more about her mother, if not her sudden death? How do you imagine Maggie and Iris's relationship evolving if she had lived?
- ✚ What are some examples of how knowledge is, or is actively not, passed down through generations and across communities? How is that significant to the plot and/or characters?
- ✚ So much is half-expressed and unresolved in the book – what did you want more of?