

Marlborough Public Library Adult Book Club

July 9 or 11, 2024

*People of the Book* by Geraldine Brooks

Questions from:

<https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/291177/people-of-the-book-by-geraldine-brooks/9780143115007/readers-guide/>

1. When Hanna implores Ozren to solicit a second opinion on Alia's condition, he becomes angry and tells her, "Not every story has a happy ending" (p. 37). To what extent do you believe that their perspectives on tragedy and death are cultural? To what extent are they personal?
2. Isak tells Mordechai, "At least the pigeon does no harm. The hawk lives at the expense of the other creatures that dwell in the desert" (p. 50). If you were Lola, would you have left the safety of your known life and gone to Palestine? Is it better to live as a pigeon or a hawk? Is there an alternative?
3. When Father Vistorni asks Rabbi Judah Ayreh to warn the printer that the Church disapproves of one of their recently published texts, Ayreh tells him, "better you do it than to have us so intellectually enslaved that we do it for you" (p. 156). Do you agree or disagree with his argument? With the way he handled Vistorni's request?
4. What was it, ultimately, that made Father Vistorini approve the haggadah? Since Brooks leaves this part of the story unclear, how do you imagine it made its way from his rooms to Sarajevo?
5. Several of the novel's female characters lived in the pre-feminist era and certainly fared poorly at the hands of men. Does the fact that she was pushing for gender equality—not to mention saving lives—justify Sarah Heath's poor parenting skills? Would women's rights be where they are today if it weren't for women like her?
6. Have you ever been in a position where your professional judgment has been called into question? How did you react?
7. Was Hanna being fair to suspect only Amitai of the theft? Do you think charges should have been pressed against the culprits?
8. How did Hanna change after discovering the truth about her father? Would the person she was before her mother's accident have realized that she loved Ozren? Or risked the dangers involved in returning the codex?
9. There is an amazing array of "people of the book"—both base and noble—whose lifetimes span some remarkable periods in human history. Who is your favorite and why?