

BOOK CLUB in a bag

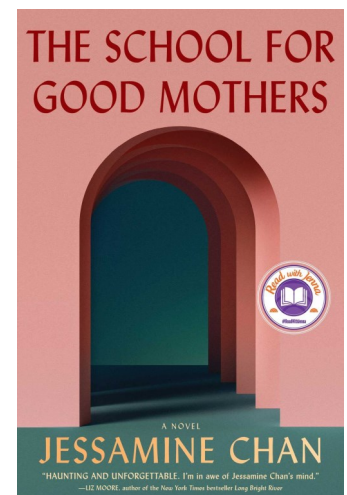


The School for Good Mothers

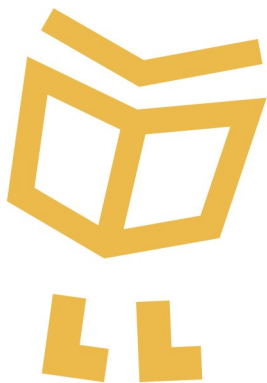
Jessamine Chan

Discussion Questions

1. Consider the epigraph from Anne Carson. How does this excerpt set the tone for the story? What do you think the relationship is between fear and motherhood?
2. The novel centers around Frida's "one very bad day" (1). What are the stressors in Frida's life that make this bad day not only possible but likely? In other words, what odds are stacked against her
3. During her first psychological evaluation, Frida says that "you can't judge [my parents] by American standards" (46). How does Frida approach motherhood as a Chinese American woman? How is this different from how her own mother approached parenting? How does the school approach cultural differences in parenting?
4. Throughout the book, the women are subjected to a narrow definition of what makes a "good" mother. According to the school, what makes a good mother? How does that compare with how Frida defines what makes a good mother? Or how would you define it?
5. *The School for Good Mothers* depicts parenting as entwined with a new surveillance state. Discuss how this relates to our current cultural climate. Is there, as Renee says, "It's not like there's any privacy anymore" (18)? What are the rights that parents give up when they encounter the state --- both in this book and out in the real world? Do you think those loss of rights are worth the cost to keep children safe?
6. Helen, Frida's roommate, is at the school for coddling, which is described as a "subset of emotional abuse" (86). Do you think a mother can ever love too much? What are the different ways a mother's love can manifest?
7. How do Frida and her cohort first react to the dolls? How does their relationship with the dolls change over the course of the book?
8. Which mother do you identify with the most? Were there any to whom you felt especially sympathetic – or perhaps especially judgemental?
9. Early on, Lucretia guesses that the fathers' program probably has "workbooks and multiple-choice quizzes. All they have to do is show up. Isn't that always how it goes?" (106). What are the differences between the men's and women's programs? Do you believe that women are routinely held to a higher standard in parenting? How and why?
10. What do you make of Frida's final act? How does she decide that what she's risking is ultimately worth the cost? What does this decision say about her as a mother? As a person?



BOOK CLUB in a bag



This book may be available for download as an eBook and an audiobook.

For more information, please visit lpl.overdrive.com or call 519-661-4600.

About the Author

Jessamine Chan's stories have appeared in Tin House and Epoch. A former reviews editor at Publishers Weekly, she holds an MFA from Columbia University. She lives in Chicago with her family. *The School for Good Mothers* is her first novel.

Via the author's website (<https://www.jessaminechan.com/jessamine-chan-bio>)

Source: <https://www.readinggroupguides.com/reviews/the-school-for-good-mothers/guide>

Need titles for your next book club? Visit lpl.ca/bookclubinabag

