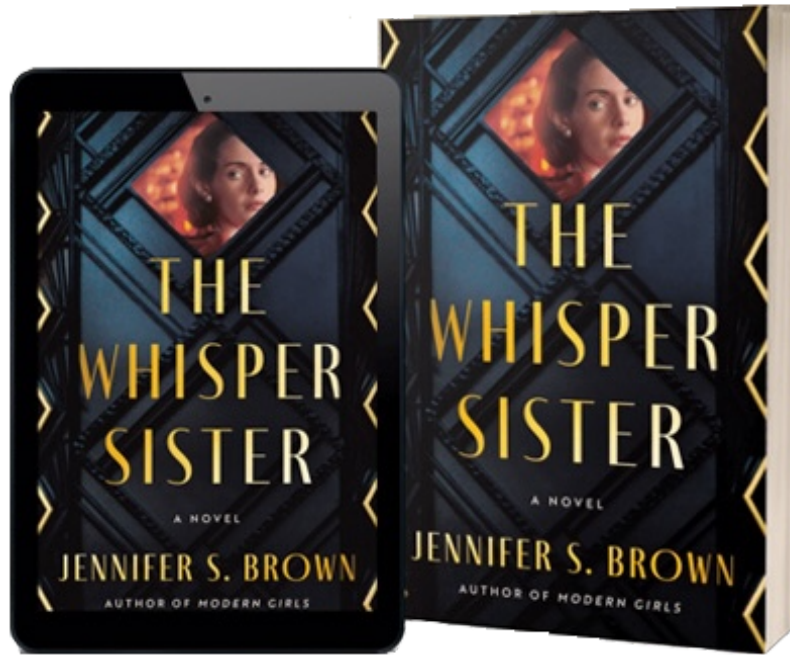


Reader's Guide



The Whisper Sister by Jennifer S. Brown

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Discussion Guide



1. Initially, Minnie is disappointed by America. What do you know of your family's immigration story? If you are an immigrant, how did your picture of the United States match up with the reality of the United States.

2. Minnie and Max change their names from Malka and Shmerka. In Eastern European Jewish tradition, babies are named for deceased relatives. Feige refuses to use their new names, saying, "Changing your name is an insult to your ancestors." Do you agree with her? Or with Ike who says, "Everyone gets an American name"? What do you think the names meant to each of them?

3. Feige wears a red ring to ward off the evil eye when she's pregnant. She also refuses to discuss her condition in fear of inviting in the evil eye. Does your family or community have superstitions that have been passed down? If so, what are they? Do you believe in superstitions?

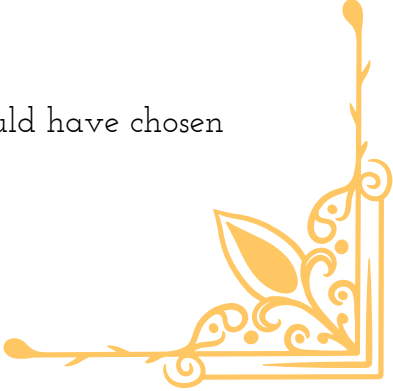
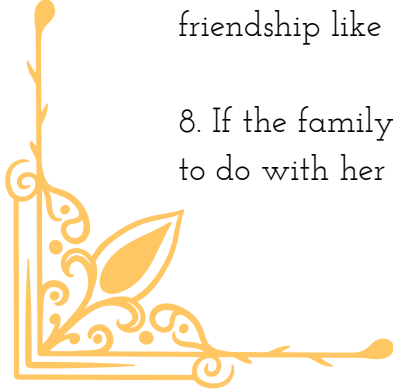
4. Religion is a point of contention between Feige and Ike; Feige believes in God and Ike does not. Minnie is caught in the middle. What do you think Minnie believes? Why does she not feel like a "real" Jew?

5. Do you agree or disagree with how Minnie decided to take care of Gertie and Louise after Louise's arm broke. Had you been in her position, what would you have done?

6. How would you describe the personalities of Feige, Ike, Minnie, and Max? Which one do you identify with the most?

7. Sylvia and Minnie often got into trouble together. But Sylvia also helped Minnie. Do you consider Sylvia a good or bad influence on Minnie? Have you ever had a friendship like theirs?

8. If the family had remained intact, what do you think Minnie would have chosen to do with her life?





Discussion Guide cont.



9. Minnie is immediately enamored with Duke. Are Duke and Ike alike in any ways? How did you feel about Duke when he and Minnie started dating? Do you think it's true that women like "bad boys"?



10. Holidays are extremely important to the family. Why do you think that Max and Minnie decided to not celebrate Passover with friends or family? Have you had holidays that you didn't want to celebrate?

11. Max vehemently demands that Minnie stay away from the bar. Minnie, of course, disobeys. Can you relate to this? Have you ever gone against a family member's wishes? Have they ever gone against yours?

12. What had you thought life was like in the 1920s? Were you surprised by anything?

13. Feige and Ike often fought yet were also tender with each other. Did you think their marriage was a strong one or a troubled one? How would you compare their marriage to the relationship of Duke and Minnie?

14. Despite Prohibition, drinking abounded. If you lived in the 1920s, would you have partaken? Or lived a law-abiding life as a tee-totaler? What comparisons can you make between Prohibition and issues of today?





Cocktails & Mocktails



Enhance your book club discussion with one of the drinks
Minnie makes for her bar. (Poison not included.)

For the Speakeasy Folk

The Mary Pickford

2 oz rum
1 oz pineapple juice
1 dash Grenadine

Shake with ice, strain into a martini glass, garnish with
a cherry.

The Florida

2 oz white rum
3/4 oz grapefruit juice
1/2 oz lime juice
Splash of simple syrup* (to taste)

Shake all the ingredients with ice. Strain into a chilled coupe.
Garnish with a maraschino cherry and a lime wheel.

***Simple Syrup**

Put equal amounts of water and sugar in a saucepan.
Heat until the sugar has completely dissolved.
Can be kept in the fridge for about a month.

From *Cocktails* by "Jimmy," Late of Ciro's London, 1930





Cocktails & Mocktails



For the Temperance Crowd

Grenadine Punch

1 quart still water
1 quart sparkling water
½ cup grenadine
4 lemons
2 oranges
12 large strawberries
1 cup sugar

Extract the juice of the lemons and oranges and mix with the sugar. Chill until ready to serve, then mix with the still water. Put ice in the punch bowl and pour in the mixture. Stir in grenadine, add the strawberries, and finally add the sparkling water.

Mock Champagne Cocktail

1 quart sparkling cider
1 quart white grapefruit juice
4 lemons
½ cup of sugar
1 pint ginger ale
1 pint water

Extract the juice from the grapefruit and lemons. Add the sugar and water, and stir until sugar is dissolved (you can also substitute a simple syrup for this step). Add the grapefruit juice. Mix and put in a bowl with a block of ice. Add cider and ginger ale.



From *What to Drink: The Blue Book of Beverages*
by Bertha E. L. Stockbridge, 1920

