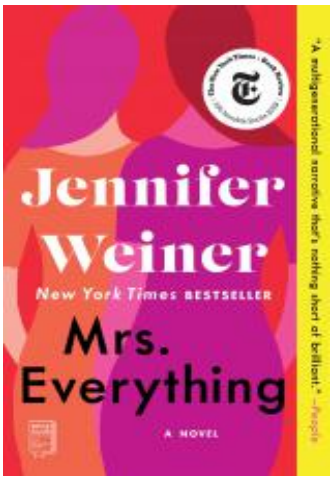
Mrs. Everything

by Jennifer Weiner



About the Book

From Jennifer Weiner, the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of WHO DO YOU LOVE and IN HER SHOES, comes a smart, thoughtful and timely exploration of two sisters? lives from the 1950s to the present as they struggle to find their places --- and be true to themselves --- in a rapidly evolving world. MRS. EVERYTHING is an ambitious, richly textured journey through history --- and herstory --- as these two sisters navigate a changing America over the course of their lives.

Do we change, or does the world change us?

Jo and Bethie Kaufman were born into a world full of promise.

Growing up in 1950s Detroit, they live in a perfect ?Dick and Jane? house, where their roles in the family are clearly defined. Jo is the tomboy, the bookish rebel with a passion to make the world more fair; Bethie is the pretty, feminine good girl, a would-be star who enjoys the power her beauty confers and dreams of a traditional life.

But the truth ends up looking different from what the girls imagined. Jo and Bethie survive traumas and tragedies. As their lives unfold against the background of free love and Vietnam, Woodstock and women?s lib, Bethie becomes an adventure-loving wild child who dives headlong into the counterculture and is up for anything (except settling down). Meanwhile, Jo becomes a proper young mother in Connecticut, a witness to the changing world instead of a participant. Neither woman inhabits the world she dreams of, nor has a life that feels authentic or brings her joy. Is it too late for the women to finally stake a claim on happily ever after?

In her most ambitious novel yet, Jennifer Weiner tells a story of two sisters who, with their different dreams and different paths, offer answers to the question: How should a woman be in the world?

Discussion Guide

1. Jo and Bethie are very different people. But in what ways do you find them similar? Do their similarities outweigh their differences? How do their similarities cause problems in their relationship?

2. Forgiveness, of others and of the characters? own selves, is an important theme in the novel. Discuss how the characters work through their conflicts and how they do or do not resolve the issues.

3. Compare and contrast how Jo and Bethie are influenced by their mother. Is there a defining element of their relationship with their mother? How does it weave its way into the sisters? lives?

4. MRS. EVERYTHING spans half of the 20th century and the early part of the 21st. What period details make you feel immersed in each decade? Were there any details that you remembered from your own past? Were there details about life in earlier decades that surprised you? What effect did this have on your reading experience?

5. In MRS. EVERYTHING, Jennifer Weiner has created many memorable secondary characters, from Mrs. Kaufman to Lila to Jo?s and Bethie?s partners and beyond. Did you have a favorite? What qualities made them come alive for you?

6. Were you ever frustrated by the choices Jo and Bethie made? Did you empathize with their choices, despite feeling frustrated?

7. Literature is full of sisters with complex relationships. Do Jo and Bethie remind you of other favorite sister duos? What is it about the sister relationship that captivates us as readers?

8. What draws Jo and Shelley together? After they?ve reunited, what keeps them together?

9. What do Bethie and Harold learn from each other throughout their relationship?

10. Because MRS. EVERYTHING takes places over several decades, it touches on many political and social movements. Did you learn anything about American history while reading? Was there a cause or issue that particularly interested you?

11. When Lila visits Bethie for the summer, they have a heart-to-heart about the pressure Lila feels from her mother to be special and achieve great things. Bethie tells Lila that it comes from the lack of options the sisters had growing up in a different era: ?Some girls did grow up and became doctors and lawyers and school principals.... A few girls did grow up and do things, and got those jobs, but for the rest of us, we were told that the most important thing was to be married, and be a mother.... She just doesn?t want that to be the only choice you have? (page 392). Though Lila does have more opportunities available to her than her mother and aunt did, she (and her generation) faces new challenges. Did you relate to Lila?s concerns?

12. How does faith --- both religious and in a more general sense --- inform Jo and Bethie? What does faith mean to the sisters?

Author Bio

Jennifer Weiner is a #1 *New York Times* bestselling author whose books have spent over five years on the *New York Times* bestseller list, with more than 11 million copies in print in 36 countries.

She is the author of the novels GOOD IN BED (2001); IN HER SHOES (2002), which was turned into a major motion picture starring Cameron Diaz, Toni Collette and Shirley MacLaine; LITTLE EARTHQUAKES (2004); GOODNIGHT NOBODY (2005); the short story collection THE GUY NOT TAKEN (2006); CERTAIN GIRLS (2008); BEST FRIENDS FOREVER (2009); FLY AWAY HOME (2010); THEN CAME YOU (2011); THE NEXT BEST THING (2012); ALL FALL DOWN (2014); WHO DO YOU LOVE (2015); MRS. EVERYTHING (2019); BIG SUMMER (2020); THAT SUMMER (2021); THE SUMMER PLACE (2022); GOLDEN HILLS (2023); THE BREAKAWAY (2024); and THE GRIFFIN SISTERS' GREATEST HITS (2025).

She is also the author of *The Littlest Bigfoot* middle-grade trilogy: THE LITTLEST BIGFOOT (2016) LITTLE BIGFOOT, BIG CITY (2017), and THE BIGFOOT QUEEN (2023).

Her nonfiction collection, HUNGRY HEART: Adventures in Life, Love, and Writing (2016), was a finalist for the PEN/Diamonstein -Spielvogel Award for the Art of the Essay.

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