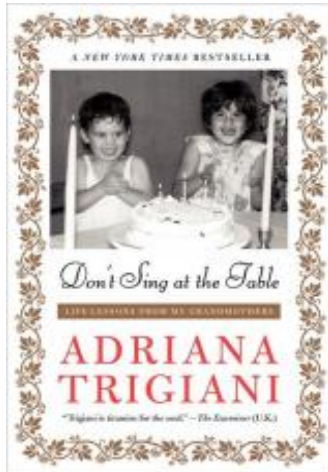


# Don't Sing at the Table: Life Lessons from My Grandmothers

by Adriana Trigiani



## About the Book

As devoted readers of Adriana Trigiani's *New York Times* bestselling novels know, this "seemingly effortless storyteller" (*Boston Globe*) frequently draws inspiration from her own family history, in particular from the lives of her two remarkable grandmothers, Lucia Spada Bonicelli (Lucy) and Yolanda Perin Trigiani (Viola). In **Don't Sing at the Table**, she reveals how her grandmothers' simple values have shaped her own life, sharing the experiences, humor, and wisdom of her beloved mentors to delight readers of all ages.

Trigiani visits the past to seek answers to the essential questions that define the challenges women face today at work and at home. **Don't Sing at the Table** is a primer, grandmother to granddaughter, filled with everyday wisdom and life lessons handed down with care and built to last.

## Discussion Guide

1. Adriana wrote that she was able to write **DON'T SING AT THE TABLE** because her grandmothers "never threw anything away --- clothing, bank records, contracts, wills, newspaper clippings, photographs." What did your grandmothers pass down to you? What can those items tell you about the way they lived their lives?
2. Adriana wrote of Lucia, "No one ever in the course of my entire life was ever as happy to see me as she was. Looking back now, I realize that you only ever need one person who lights up that way when you enter a room. One person is all it takes to give a kid confidence." Who was that person for you?
3. Is craftsmanship valued as much today as it was in Viola and Lucia's time? What has changed?
4. Adriana recalled "Venetian eggs" --- poached eggs in homemade tomato sauce with fresh dandelion --- as one of her

favorite meals Viola made her. What are some of your favorite meals your grandmothers made you?

5. In what ways were Viola and Lucia different? In what ways were they similar? Do you recognize aspects of your own grandmothers in them? Do you recognize aspects of yourself?

6. Adriana and her sisters still wear Viola's coats. Do you wear any of your grandmothers' clothing or jewelry? What did they teach you about style and beauty?

7. Adriana wrote, "Our family stories have it all: risk, adventure, romance and intrigue. The places my grandmothers came from were described in stories they told." What is a favorite story your grandmother told?

8. Lucy and Viola only met once. Though they held one another at a respectful distance, there was an underlying camaraderie. What was the relationship between your grandmothers?

9. Which "life lessons" described in *DON'T SING AT THE TABLE* do you value most? Did your grandmothers pass down any of the same advice to you?

10. What are your rules for living? Do you share any with Viola and Lucia?

## Author Bio

Adriana Trigiani is the *New York Times* bestselling author of 21 books of fiction and nonfiction. Her work has been published in 38 languages around the world. An award-winning playwright, television writer/producer, and filmmaker, Trigiani wrote and directed the major motion picture of her debut novel, *BIG STONE GAP*; adapted her novel, *VERY VALENTINE*, for television; and directed the documentary, *Queens of the Big Time*, among others.

In 2023, President Sergio Mattarella of Italy awarded Trigiani the *Cavaliere dell'Ordine della Stella d'Italia*. The Library of Virginia bestowed their highest honor, the *Patron of Letters* degree, to Trigiani in 2024. She received the 2025 Ellis Island Medal of Honor for her significant contributions to literature, culture, and community.

Trigiani grew up in Appalachia, in the mountains of Virginia, where she co-founded The Origin Project, a year-round, in-school writing program that has served over 25,000 students since its inception in 2014. Trigiani is proud to serve on the New York State Council on the Arts. She lives in Greenwich Village with her family.

## Critical Praise

"Delightful, energetic.... Trigiani is a seemingly effortless storyteller."

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