ReadingGroupGuides
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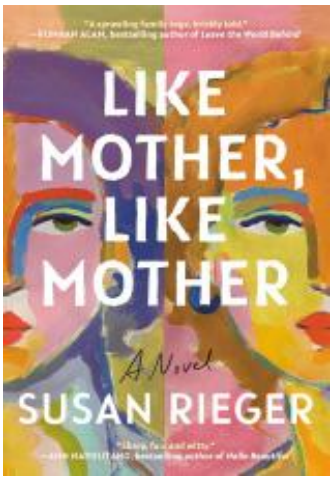
Like Mother, Like Mother

by Susan Rieger



About the Book

An enthralling novel about three generations of strong-willed women, unknowingly shaped by the secrets buried in their family?s past.

Detroit, 1960. Lila Pereira is two years old when her angry, abusive father has her mother committed to an asylum. Lila never sees her mother again. Three decades later, having mustered everything she has --- brains, charm, talent, blond hair --- Lila rises to the pinnacle of American media as the powerful, brilliant executive editor of *The Washington Globe*. Lila unapologetically prioritizes her career, leaving the rearing of her daughters to her generous husband, Joe. He doesn?t mind --- until he does.

But Grace, their youngest daughter, feels abandoned. She wishes her mother would attend PTA meetings, not White House correspondents? dinners. As she grows up, she cannot shake her resentment. She wants out from under Lila?s shadow, yet the more she resists, the more Lila seems to shape her life. Grace becomes a successful reporter, even publishing a bestselling book about her mother. In the process of writing it, she realizes how little she knows about her own family. Did Lila?s mother, Grace?s grandmother, die in that asylum? Is refusal to look back the only way to create a future? How can you ever be yourself, Grace wonders, if you don?t know where you came from?

Spanning generations and populated by complex, unforgettable characters, LIKE MOTHER, LIKE MOTHER is an exhilarating, portrait of family, marriage, ambition, power, the stories we inherit, and the lies we tell to become the people we believe we?re meant to be.

Discussion Guide

1. At the center of LIKE MOTHER, LIKE MOTHER is the unforgettable Lila Pereira. Lila reaches the pinnacle of American political power as the brilliant editor of D.C.?s famous muckraking newspaper, *The Washington Globe*. She

does this by being completely unapologetically married to her job. Her loving partner, Joe, knows what he signed up for: he will be both the mom and dad. How did you feel about Lila?s choices? Is liking a character essential to liking a book?

2. Do any of the book?s characters remind you of your own family? How does the book force you to contend with your own lineage?

3. How did you react to Grace? Are her choices understandable? Do you think she is right to be upset?

4. What purpose does Zelda serve in bridging the gap between Grace and Lila?

5. What was the purpose of Grace?s novel, *The Lost Mother*? How does her writing reinforce or challenge her character?

6. Would Lila?s choices be judged differently if she were a man? How so? How does gender influence our ideas of who makes a good parent?

7. How did the political landscape underscore the themes of the novel? What purpose did the elections serve?

8. What do you think causes the blockages in Grace?s relationship with Xander? Do they navigate these challenges well?

9. Discuss Grace?s relationship with her sisters, the Starbirds. How are they alike? How are they different?

10. How did you feel about the end of the book and the resolution of the central mystery?

Author Bio

Susan Rieger is a graduate of Columbia Law School. She has worked as a residential college dean at Yale and as an associate provost at Columbia. She has taught law to undergraduates at both schools and written frequently about the law for newspapers and magazines. She is the author of LIKE MOTHER, LIKE MOTHER; THE HEIRS; and THE DIVORCE PAPERS. She lives in New York City with her husband.

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Publication Date: November 11, 2025
Genres: Fiction, Women's Fiction
Paperback: 352 pages
Publisher: Dial Press Trade Paperback
ISBN-10: 0525512519
ISBN-13: 9780525512516