

Rashi's Daughter: Secret Scholar

Readers' Discussion Questions

1. Joheved and Salomon begin the novel as strangers.

- ◆ How does the bond between them develop and change with time?
- ◆ What do they have in common?

2. Since Talmudic times, women have been excluded from Talmud study.

- ◆ Why does Joheved want to study Talmud?
- ◆ Did the novel's Talmudic quotes help your understanding of the Jewish religion and its laws?
- ◆ Did any of these laws surprise you? Intrigue you?
- ◆ Why do you think more Jews don't study Talmud today?

3. Joheved's world is filled with demons.

- ◆ Were you surprised that an educated man such as Salomon believed in demons?
- ◆ Were you surprised by other superstitions Jocheved's family accepted?
- ◆ Do you recognize any superstitions that are practiced today?

4. *Rashi's Daughter: Secret Scholar* is filled with carefully researched historical anecdotes that the author uses as inspiration for her imagined scenes.

- ◆ Were there any parts of the story where you wondered what was fact and what was fiction?
- ◆ How could you find out?

5. Rivka is upset that her daughters are learning Talmud.

- ◆ Are her objections reasonable?
- ◆ Why would men not want women to study or attain knowledge?
- ◆ Do women today still try to hide their intelligence? Why?

6. Joheved and Meir have an arranged marriage, as do Salomon and Rivka.

- ◆ How does Joheved and Meir's relationship compare to Salomon and Rivka's?
- ◆ To Miriam and Benjamin's?
- ◆ Could you imagine an arranged marriage vs. marrying for love?

7. Relations between French Jews and Christians were fairly tolerant during the 11th century.

- ◆ Was this lack of overt anti-Semitism surprising?
- ◆ Did any other elements about life in medieval times in this book surprise you?

8. The author includes a glossary of terms at the end of her novel.

- ◆ Did these help you understand and enjoy the book?
- ◆ Why do you think the author weaves Hebrew and French words into her characters' dialogue?

9. Religion was a powerful force for both Jews and Christians in medieval times.

- ◆ Is religion as powerful a force today?
- ◆ How does your religion, or lack of one, influence your life?