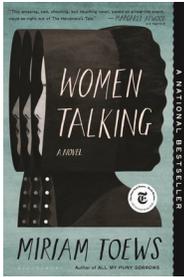


Books by the Stack



Women Talking by Miriam Toews

After learning the men in the community have been drugging and attacking more than a hundred Mennonite women, eight of the women meet in secret to decide whether they should escape to a place outside the colony or stay in the only world they've ever known.

Why you'll like it: *Compelling. Unconventional. Inspired by real events.*

About the Author: Miriam Toews was born in 1964 in Canada. She is best known for her novels *A Complicated Kindness* and *All My Puny Sorrows*. Toews had a leading role in the feature film *Silent Light*, written and directed by Mexican filmmaker, Carlos Reygadas and winner of the 2007 Cannes Jury Prize, an experience that influenced her fifth novel, *Irma Voth*.

Questions for Discussion

1. *Women Talking* begins with “A Note on the Novel” which explains that the story is a fictionalized account of real events. What is the difference between reading this novel versus reading a news story or nonfiction book about these events? What questions does *Women Talking* encourage readers to ask themselves about these events and the environment in which they occur?
2. The book is told through August Epp’s notes from the women’s meetings. Why does Toews choose Epp to narrate this story? How does his perspective, gender, and personal history affect the vantage from which the story is told?
3. The women frequently discuss the complexity of continuing to love many of the men in their community despite their fear and they contemplate the circumstances under which the men would be allowed to join them in their new society. In what ways does the novel explore questions about male experiences, perspectives, and culture?
4. Which of the options would you have taken if you were one of the women? Explain why. Consider the consequences and benefits of your choice. How would you convince the others to join you?
5. The book examines both sexual and domestic violence. How does the women’s environment and circumstances dictate how they understand, interpret, and, ultimately, deal with violence? How does this intersect with their religious faith and their beliefs about their place in the world?
6. Discuss the power of language and literacy. How would the women’s lives be changed if they could read? How does their ability to interpret the Bible for themselves change the women’s understanding of their future?

7. How does this novel engage with mainstream political and social conversations about women and their rights?

(Questions provided by litlovers.com)



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