



Have Mother, Will Travel

By Claire Fontaine
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Questions for Discussion

1. Mia mentions the term "daughtering"—what does she mean by that? She also says that "there are few women we make as many assumptions about as our mothers." Do you agree? If so, what assumptions do most of us tend to make? If you're a mom, what assumptions, or judgments, do you feel from your daughter?
2. Do you see differences in "mothering" between your mother's generation and your own? If so, what impact do you think it's had on children?
3. If your mother were, God forbid, gone tomorrow, do you think you could say you really knew her, as a woman, not just as your mother? Do you think she would feel you did? As a daughter, do you feel like your mom really knows you? What three things do you wish your mother, and your daughter if you have one, really got about you?
4. Claire writes about how different the lives of French and American mothers are. What do you think we can learn from each other?
5. Claire writes of having to leave her life in order to see it. Why? What are some of the ways women can get lost in their own their lives? Did you learn anything about your own life, as a woman, from the book?
6. What did you think of the Vision Map process? What did Claire and Mia learn from each other? If you were to create one, what images and words would you put on it?
7. Claire writes of women going for gold stars instead of gold in their lives. What did she mean by that? Do you think women still do this? Is this something that shows up in your own lives?
8. What caused the final break between Claire and her mother? Do you feel her mother was justified in her response? Claire writes that she's noticed this more in boomer women and their mothers. Do you notice this or agree? Why?
9. Our family history colors our present. How do you think being a child of a Holocaust survivor affected Claire growing up, and as a mother? How do you think it showed up in Mia's life and character? How is Claire's relationship with her mother mirrored in her relationship with Mia?
10. What did Mia observe in Aza that gave her such pause? Do you see any differences between yourself in your twenties and your mother or daughter in hers?
11. There's a focus in the media now on how American "helicopter" parenting has created a generation of young adults that is less self-sufficient and more self-entitled. What do Claire and Mia have to say about this? Do you agree? Do you see this in your own kids (if you have them)?
12. If you could choose any time to be a mother, what era would it be? In what era would you choose to grow up?
13. How did Claire's way of listening to Mia evolve over the trip? Moms and daughters tend to listen to each other through filters—what do you think some of them are?
14. Do you think American daughters have the same sense of duty to their moms that women in other cultures do?
15. Mia had a significant emotional release at the Abbey of Senanque, in France. How did Claire respond? What impact do you think it had on their relationship?
16. What did Claire learn about being a daughter from Mia? How is your relationship with your daughter, if you have one, different from yours with your mother?
17. Claire writes that as mothers we often steal our daughter's trust in themselves by our own, often unconscious, lack of trust in them. What do you think she means when she says that in co-opting their dilemma, we steal their power? Is this something you find yourself doing, even if with good intentions?
18. Mia writes that watching Claire evolve over the course of their travels helped her grow up. In what ways?
19. Toward the book's end, Mia references a short Ursula le Guin story, tying it to the street children she saw in Kathmandu. In light of the numerous sexual abuse scandals cropping up in the news (from the clergy to Penn State), how do you think we could change social norms in our own country when it comes to keeping children safe?

20. Mia seems to hold on to a sense of guilt based on what she put her mom through as a teen. Do you think guilt about past actions, by a mother or a daughter, colors most mother-daughter relationships, or was this more unique to their relationship?
21. After reading *Have Mother, Will Travel*, which of the countries that Claire and Mia visited would you want to visit most? Why?
22. Claire and Mia became quite enchanted by the medieval city of Avignon, France. Were you equally enchanted? What things about it stood out for you?
23. Mia speaks about her discomfort in seeing herself as an adult woman at the age of twenty-five. Do you think this is typical for twenty-somethings in American culture? At what age did you feel truly grown up?
24. After reading *Have Mother, Will Travel*, is there anything you'd do differently as a mom or daughter? What lessons or insight did you take away from the book?