



## The Other Mothers' Club

By Samantha Baker  
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### Introduction

Eve has had it'she's no "wicked stepmonster" in the making. She absolutely adores Ian, the new man in her life, and she's more than willing to open her heart to his kids. But nothing she does is right in their eyes, and she just can't take it anymore.

At her wit's end, she decides it's time for stepmothers to stick together, so, with a little prodding from her best friend, Clare, she decides to join a support system for other women in the same boat. There's stay-at-home mom Mandy, high-achiever Mel, and even young and in love Chloe. And as cups of coffee give way to wine, and their get-togethers become a regular fixture, the women share their love, lives, ambitions, and true feelings about their new families.

### Questions for Discussion

1. At the start of the novel, Eve describes meeting her new partner's children as more nerve-wracking than taking a driving test, sitting for exams, and going to the dentist. Do you agree? Do you think that she makes too big a deal of it?
2. Do you agree that in our society stepmothers are usually considered to be 'the baddie'? Why do you think this is?
3. Hannah makes it clear from the start that she doesn't have much time for Eve. Whose responsibility do you think it is to build a relationship? The child's, the new partner's or the parent's?
4. In today's society many relationships come with baggage (and ghosts). This can be emotional, children from a previous marriage, an ex husband or wife. In *TOMC*, the ghosts take two forms: the children; and memories of Ian's dead wife Caroline (who wrote newspaper columns about her struggle with cancer that were turned into a book). To what extent is *TOMC* about laying ghosts to rest?
5. Eve bonds with Alfie very quickly. The same can't be said for Hannah and Sophie. Why do you think that is?
6. When Eve is telling *TOMC* about her troubles with Hannah, Clare talks about her own experience with a stepmother (the stepmonster). What can we learn from the similarities and differences of Clare and Hannah's reactions to the new women in their fathers' lives?
7. Whilst *TOMC* is about a wide group of women, and the power of female friendship, Clare and Eve are definitely the main characters. They have been friends since they were students, but on the face of it, they are very different. What do you think lies at the heart of their friendship? What do you think each woman gets from their relationship with the other?
8. Clare's sister, Lily, is dating a newly separated father, Liam. Clare thinks Liam is unreliable, while Lily thinks his ex-wife is equally to blame. Who do you think is right?
9. To what extent do you think Lily and Clare's differing attitudes to men in general, and Liam in particular, are affected by the wide gap between their ages when their parents divorced?
10. When Clare's daughter, Lou, was born, Clare was 18. The father, Will, refused to stay with them and went off to medical college, but his family sent Clare money to help look after Lou. Despite her mother's protests, Clare threw the money away. Did Clare do the right thing? What would you have done?
11. Clare lost touch with Will and told Lou very little about her father. When, halfway through the book, Will reappears, not having told Lou about her father causes Clare untold trouble. Do you think Clare was right not to tell Lou about her dad? What do you think her motivation was? Does Lou have a right to be angry?
12. The women spend a lot of time in coffee shops. What significance do you think coffee shops hold in our society?
13. The ghost of the ex looms large in Melanie and Vince's relationship too but this ghost is alive and well and keeps turning up wherever they are. When Vince accuses Melanie of not being over him, do you think he's right? Or is Vince more hung up on Mel's ex than she is?
14. Many male readers have told me they feel Mel treats Vince appallingly, while many women have said he was simply her 'transitional man' and should have known it. What do you think?
15. Mandy differs from the other characters in having a blended family her own children and stepchildren. To what extent do you think this gives her greater authority over the other women?
16. Mandy believes that there 'is no mother in stepmother'. Do you agree? And how does Eve square this with the fact that her children no longer have a mother of their own? Do you think it is easier or harder to be stepmother to children who have lost their own mother?

17. A film is being made of Caroline's book. When the film company wants Hannah to be interviewed with the young actress who will play her, it leads to an enormous fight. Who do you think is to blame? Should Ian have dealt with the matter? Does Eve interfere too much as Hannah claims? What would you have done?

18. Hannah and Lou deal with their new stepmothers in very different ways. To what extent do you think the way the girls behave influences the very different relationships they have with them?

19. As young women, both Eve and Clare fell pregnant. They made very different decisions about how to deal with those pregnancies. Who do you think was right? And who is happiest about the outcome of that decision?

20. To what extent does the decision Eve made when she was 21 define the way she behaves when she becomes pregnant towards the end of the novel?

21. Ian and Eve's relationship is already rocky when Eve tells him she's pregnant. Is he in any way right when he says it's the wrong right time to bring a baby into their unhappy step-family?

22. Do you think that the fact Hannah is roughly the age Eve's child would have been complicates the way Eve behaves towards her? If so, why? (Given she has such a good relationship with Lou who is only a year or so older.)

23. Should Eve have told Hannah about her termination? Hannah wants to be treated like an adult'and it unquestionably strengthens their relationship'but is it right or wrong to treat a young teenager like an adult in this way?

24. Do you think Clare's experience with her own stepmother will make her a better or worse stepmother herself?

25. Despite the fact that many of the women don't know each other at the start of the book, they come to rely on the friendship and support that *TOMC* offers. Do you have a group of friends like this? What do they offer that you don't get from the other relationships in your life?

26. If there was a film based on *The Other Mothers' Club*, who would you choose to play the characters?

#### **About the Author**

Samantha Baker has edited some of the UK's most popular magazines, including *J-17*, *Company*, and *Cosmopolitan* UK. She is editor in chief of *Red*, and lives between Winchester, Hampshire, and central London with her husband and grown-up stepson.