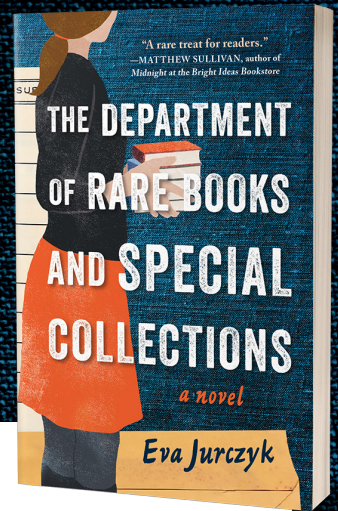


# THE DEPARTMENT OF RARE BOOKS AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

by *Eva Jurczyk*

## DISCUSSION GUIDE



1. What was your first impression of Liesl, as a leader, as a parent, as a woman? Did your opinion change throughout the book?
2. Everyone except Liesl is extremely reluctant to involve the police. What do they fear? What are the consequences of that fear?
3. Liesl often has to swallow her feelings to get along with her colleagues and family. Have you ever been in a situation where you felt like you couldn't be honest about what you felt? What impact did that have? How does Liesl's isolation affect her search for the Plantin?
4. The Peshawar facsimile at the book fair makes Liesl uncomfortable. Do you think reproductions of rare books or art cheapen the original? What do you see as the difference between a facsimile and a forgery?
5. The characters at the library spend their days surrounded by priceless books. Was there a title in the library's collection that especially moved you? Which of the books would you have stolen to keep for yourself?

6. Francis is a complicated character, especially from Liesl's perspective. Were you rooting for him? Did you think he deserved Max's suspicion? How did Liesl's feelings about him shape your impression?
7. Liesl mentions having "never had more authority and less control in my life." What's the difference between authority and control? Have you ever been in a similar position?
8. One of the barriers that prevented Miriam from seeking treatment for her depression was the possibility of people calling her "crazy" for it. How has mental health stigma shifted throughout your life? Where is it most persistent?
9. Vivek ends the book carrying a lot of guilt for his inability to help Miriam. What do you think happens to Vivek after the end of the book?
10. Hannah points out that there's a difference between putting your name forward for a promotion and doing your work well and hoping people will one day notice. Where do you fall on that scale? How do these competing theories shape the workforce, especially in how men and women are evaluated at work?
11. Of Detective Yuan's list of noncommercial motivations for theft—revenge, thrill, passion—which did you think was most likely? Who did that make you suspect?

12. When the thief was revealed, what were your thoughts? How well do we know the people around us? Do we know more or less once they leave us for good?
  
13. Would you take the chief librarian position in Liesl's place? Do you think her final decision was the right one?