

## Secret Keeper by Mitali Perkins Book Club

1. What do you think of the 3<sup>rd</sup> person narration?
  2. When did you realize the book was set in 1974?
  3. How does the time period affect the story?
  4. Do you like Asha?
  5. Do you like Reet?
  6. What did you think of the setting?
  7. Do you feel like you know Baba in spite of his absence from the book?
  8. How would you feel if you had to move in with your uncle and his family like Asha?
  9. Who is your favorite character?
  10. Who is your least favorite character?
  11. How do the diary entries add to the story?
  12. Why do you think Asha cut off her hair and played in the tennis tournament?
  13. What do you think of the gender roles in the book?
  14. How does Baba's death change the story?
  15. What do you think of Jay?
  16. How does tutoring affect Asha's life?
  17. Was the professor from Madras a good choice for Reet?
  18. What did you think of Asha's idea for Jay to marry Reet?
  19. Did you expect the marriage to happen?
  20. Does the book have a happy ending?
  21. Did you like the book?
  22. Do you think this a teen novel?
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**QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION** from <https://www.mitaliperkins.com/>

1. The French translation of the book is titled *Waiting for New York*. Brainstorm other alternate title possibilities for *Secret Keeper*. Would you keep the original? Why or why not?
2. How does Ma help or hinder the girls' situation?
3. Doors, gates, and locks are used as metaphors throughout the novel. Find a few and discuss why and how they reflect themes in the story.
4. One reviewer called the book an "anti-fairy tale." Do you agree? How is the hope of happily-ever-after depicted in the book?
5. Imagine a sequel that takes place in the 1990s, twenty years into the future for Asha and Reet. What do you hope their lives are like?
6. Ask students to write a reflective piece based on this question: Do you have a "secret keeper" where you turn to confess secrets and explore thoughts and ideas?
7. *History and Economics*: India's economy is growing fast. Ask students to research changes for women in India since the time of the novel, both in cities as well as in villages.
8. *Politics*: Indira Gandhi was the first and only female Prime Minister of India in the 1970s. Read the author's note and discuss the controversial decision Gandhi made to impose martial law on India. Could the government limit our personal liberties in the United States? Why or why not? Explore recent Homeland Security laws that have passed in the United States.
9. *Literature*: *Secret Keeper* was written partly in homage to Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*, so you might want students to read excerpts of that novel as well. How is Asha's life similar to Jo's? How are they different? Discuss the limitations and expectations these girls faced in their contexts: Asha in Kolkata, India in the 1970s, and Jo in Concord, Massachusetts in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.
10. *Culture*: Order in an Indian lunch for your students. Buy (check eBay) or borrow a sari, watch this [youtube video](#) demonstrating how to put one on, and try it with your students.