

Book Club Questions for The Invisible Hour by Alice Hoffman

1. The story begins with Mia's escape attempt from The Community in the prologue. How does this opening scene establish the mood and themes that resonate throughout the rest of the novel?
2. Ivy frequently refers to her upbringing as being "west of the moon." Where does this phrase originate, and what significance might it hold in her narrative? Why do you think she chooses this particular expression?
3. Joel's swift proposal to Ivy upon her arrival at The Community raises questions about their motivations and connections. What factors might have attracted Joel to Ivy, and what might have influenced her decision to accept his proposal?
4. The relationships between characters like Helen and Ivy, as well as Mia's connections with Sarah and Constance, exhibit certain parallels. In what ways do these relationships mirror each other? Could you identify significant divergences between them?
5. Helen emphasizes Ivy's right to decide her own fate and choices regarding her body (p. 99). The theme of choice is woven throughout the narrative. Explore the options Ivy faced upon discovering her pregnancy, such as adoption, escape, or marriage. How have these options evolved or persisted over time?
6. The various settings of Boston, Concord, and New York seem to take on roles akin to characters in the story. How do these locations contribute to the narrative and impact the characters' journeys?
7. Each female character, from Ivy's bold restart to Constance and Sarah's navigation of loss, showcases her unique brand of strength. Are there any characters you particularly relate to among these women? Discuss the reasons behind your choice.
8. Nathaniel's persistent need to write, even amidst his bouts of depression, raises questions about his relationship with his craft. Do you think writing served as a source of solace or dread for him? How did his sisters contribute to his accomplishments?
9. Elizabeth leads Mia to the Hill of Death (p. 167). What could be her motivation for this action? Why does Elizabeth harbor doubt and suspicion toward Mia? Are there underlying reasons for her lack of trust?
10. Delve into Joel's ultimate downfall. How do women play a decisive role in his final moments of defeat?
11. What do you think compelled Mia to return to Nathaniel's era? What were her aspirations for this journey into the past?

12. Mia's decision to raise her daughter as a single parent echoes Ivy's past choice. In what ways do these choices align, and how might Mia have learned from her mother's experiences and mistakes?
13. The relationship between Mia and Nathaniel Hawthorne adds an additional layer to the story. How does their connection bridge the gap between the past and the present? What insights or lessons do you think Mia gains from this relationship?
14. Mia's journey involves connections with strong women who support each other in various ways. How do these relationships contribute to the character development and the overarching themes of empowerment and sisterhood in the novel?
15. The themes of magic and time travel are present in the story. How do you think the inclusion of these fantastical elements impacts the exploration of real-world themes, such as women's rights and the struggles faced by the characters?
16. The story is praised for its portrayal of strong female characters and its exploration of their journeys. Which character's journey resonated with you the most, and how did their experiences contribute to your engagement with the novel?