

**Discussion Guide for
The Many Lives of Mama Love by Lara Love Hardin**

1. What were your initial impressions of Lara Love Hardin's story? Did you find it relatable despite its unique circumstances?
2. How did Lara's experiences in jail reshape your perceptions of the criminal justice system? Did it challenge any preconceived notions you may have had?
3. Lara describes her experience in jail as a "class system" with its own power dynamics. How does she navigate these dynamics, and what insights does she gain about human behavior in such environments?
4. Lara Love Hardin mentions that her first addiction was reading, but she later clarifies that her ultimate addiction was to escape. How does the author use various addictions to escape, and what is she trying to escape from? Additionally, do you consider reading and books as a form of escape?
5. The theme of redemption is central in the memoir. Discuss how Lara navigates the challenges of overcoming addiction, a criminal record, and social ostracism to find redemption in her life. When does she feel she has earned redemption, and how does her journey reflect this?
6. Lara earns the nickname "Mama Love" in jail by taking care of other women and offering maternal support. How does her role as "Mama Love" impact the jail culture, and what distinguishes her from the woman known as "Daddy"? How does Daddy's respect for Mama Love influence Lara's time in jail?
7. Humor is used throughout the memoir to balance its darker moments. How does humor help convey Lara's resilience and strength in the face of adversity? Was the use of humor effective in portraying such a complex and challenging journey?
8. Lara often reflects on the concept of shame and its impact on her life. How does she navigate this emotion, and what role does forgiveness play in her healing process?
9. Lara's relationship with her own identity undergoes significant changes throughout the memoir. How does she reconcile her past actions with her present self-image? In what ways does her journey reflect the broader theme of self-discovery and acceptance?
10. Consider the role of storytelling in Lara's life, both as a means of self-expression and as a tool for connecting with others. How does her ability to share her story empower her and inspire those around her?
11. Lara's encounters with influential figures like Oprah, the Dalai Lama, and Archbishop Desmond Tutu play a significant role in her journey. How do these experiences impact her perspective on forgiveness, redemption, and the pursuit of personal growth?

12. Consider Lara's interactions with her fellow inmates, particularly her role as "Mama Love." How do these relationships contribute to her growth and resilience?
13. Reflect on the role of empathy and compassion in Lara's story. How do these qualities shape her interactions with others and her own self-perception?
14. Lara discusses how she always felt like a better version of herself on the page and enjoyed pretending to be someone else through ghostwriting. How does ghostwriting connect to Lara's addiction, and how does it shape her perspective on her own life and experiences?
15. Lara faces numerous challenges navigating the requirements of the justice system after her release from jail. How does her experience shed light on the difficulties faced by female felons in the justice system? Do you believe reforms are necessary, and if so, what changes would you suggest?
16. Discuss the significance of Lara's decision to call Child Protective Services on her husband, DJ, for drug use. How does this moment mark a turning point for Lara, and how does it reflect her growth and change throughout the memoir?
17. Lara's memoir sheds light on the complexities of identity and reinvention. How does she reconcile her past with her present self, and what lessons can we learn from her journey?
18. Lara undergoes a remarkable transformation from addiction to successful ghostwriter. What factors do you think contributed most to her ability to turn her life around? How does she maintain her sobriety and focus amidst ongoing challenges?
19. The memoir touches on themes of motherhood, ambition, guilt, and the pursuit of authenticity. Which of these themes resonated with you the most, and why?
20. Lara's encounter with Doug, who emphasizes the importance of forgiveness, redemption, and Ubuntu, has a profound impact on her life. How does this moment influence Lara's journey towards self-compassion and personal growth? Would you have forgiven Lara if you were in Doug's shoes?
21. Reflect on the title of the book, "The Many Lives of Mama Love." How many lives has Lara lived, and do you believe we all live multiple lives? How did reading this memoir challenge or change your perspective on addiction, motherhood, societal judgment, and second chances?
22. Discuss the impact of Lara's story on your own perspective. Did it challenge any assumptions you had about addiction, incarceration, or personal growth?
23. In what ways does "The Many Lives of Mama Love" inspire hope and resilience? How does Lara's story exemplify the idea that our lives can be both messy and beautiful at the same time?