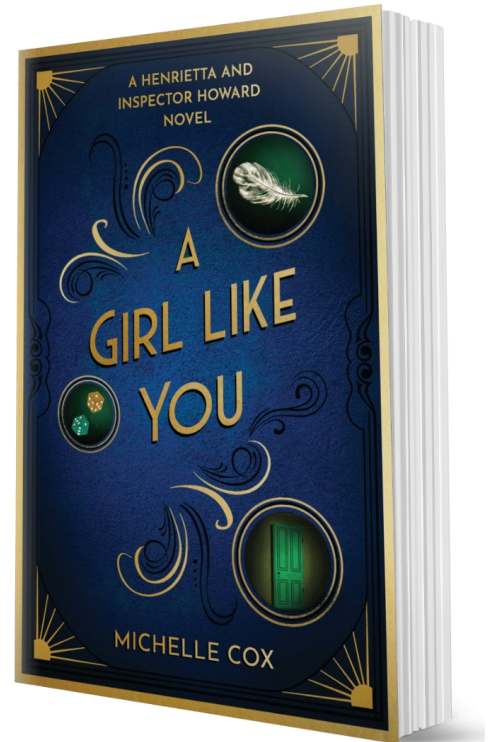


Book Club Discussion Questions for *A Girl Like You*

1. Henrietta is introduced as the breadwinner of her fatherless family, facing economic hardships and scarce jobs in 1930s Chicago. How do these circumstances and her family responsibilities influence her choices, particularly her decision to become a taxi dancer and then an usherette at the Marlowe? What do these choices reveal about her character and her definition of self-worth?
2. The phrase “a girl like you” is used repeatedly in the novel, often in contexts that question Henrietta's virtue or suitability for certain jobs. Henrietta herself grapples with societal expectations of a “good” woman versus the realities of her life. How does the novel explore themes of morality, judgment, and personal integrity in this era? How does Henrietta ultimately define “good” for herself?
3. Inspector Howard initially deceives Henrietta about his true identity and profession, later recruiting her for a dangerous undercover operation at the Marlowe. What are your thoughts on his methods? Do his intentions justify his deception and the risks he places Henrietta in, especially considering his later realization of her innocence?
4. Michelle Cox is praised for “masterfully recreating 1930s Chicago” and “bringing to life its diverse neighborhoods and eclectic residents, as well as its seedy side.” How does the pervasive economic hardship of the Great Depression influence the characters' motivations, their desperation, and the difficult choices they make throughout the novel? Consider how it shapes opportunities and dangers.
5. Henrietta moves from being a twenty-six girl at Poor Pete's to a taxi dancer at the Promenade, and finally to an usherette at the Marlowe. Compare and contrast the environments, challenges, and perceived dangers of each of these roles. How does each experience contribute to Henrietta's understanding of the world and her own capabilities?
6. Many characters in the novel engage in various forms of deception, including Henrietta (lying to her mother about her job), Inspector Howard (his identity), Polly (using an alias), and most notably, Larry (his true identity as Neptune). Discuss how these acts of deception, both personal and professional, impact the plot, character relationships, and overarching themes of the story.
7. The discovery that Larry, the seemingly “dimwitted” custodian, is the notorious Neptune, is a major plot twist. What was your initial reaction to this reveal? How does this change your



perception of earlier interactions Henrietta had with Larry, such as his comments about Libby's dress or his behavior during the audition?

8. Henrietta and Clive's relationship evolves from initial suspicion and professional interaction to a deep, complex affection and love. What specific moments or interactions stand out in the development of their feelings for each other? How do their different social backgrounds and personalities both challenge and strengthen their bond?
9. Discuss the roles and perspectives of other female characters such as Polly, Elsie, Mrs. Von Harmon, Lucy, Gwen, and Rose. How do their individual struggles, loyalties, and life choices reflect upon or contrast with Henrietta's journey and her understanding of women's roles in 1930s society?
10. Despite frequently finding herself in vulnerable or dangerous situations, Henrietta demonstrates remarkable agency and initiative. What motivates her to insist on continuing her undercover work at the Marlowe, even after recognizing the extreme dangers and Clive's desire to pull her out? How does her desire to "prove herself" to Clive intertwine with her genuine concern for Libby and Iris?
11. The novel highlights rigid class structures, with Henrietta's family having a storied but lost aristocratic past in Alsace-Lorraine. How do the family's past and current working-class status impact Henrietta's self-perception and her mother's worldview? How does the revelation about her mother's true family background challenge these established perceptions?
12. Describe the dramatic events leading up to Henrietta and Clive's rescue from Neptune. What role do unexpected allies play in their survival? What was Stan's role? Do you see him as a protective figure or a warning against settling for what's easy?