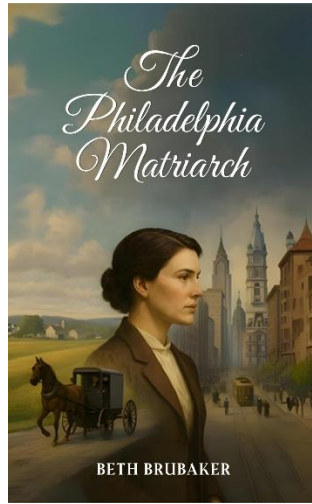


Book Club Kit:

The Philadelphia Matriarch



Welcome, book lovers! I'm thrilled you've chosen *The Philadelphia Matriarch* for your discussion. This kit is designed to enhance your experience, spark lively conversations, and delve deeper into the captivating world of Estella Fitler and her extraordinary journey.

About the Book

Inspired by true events, *The Philadelphia Matriarch* is a powerful historical saga of resilience and reunion.

In 1910s Philadelphia, Estella's world collapses when her husband abandons her and their children are forcibly taken, with her youngest daughter placed with an Amish family. Defying the odds, Estella reinvents herself in the booming city, forging an independent path in banking—an extraordinary feat for a woman of her time. Her fight for survival and dignity culminates in a poignant, culture-bridging reunion with her long-lost daughter twelve years later. This is a testament to unwavering maternal strength amidst a rapidly changing American landscape.

Themes for Discussion

- **Maternal Strength & Sacrifice:** Explore the lengths a mother will go to for her children. Is there a time that you've operated outside of your realm of expertise for your children?
- **Family Separation & Reunion:** The profound impact of being separated and the complexities of coming back together. Have you ever hoped for a reunion, only to discover that everything—and everyone—had changed?

- **Cultural Identity & Belonging:** Navigating two vastly different worlds (urban Philadelphia and Amish Country). What's the biggest contrast you've ever experienced in your life—between places, people, or even parts of yourself?
- **Women's Agency in a Patriarchal World:** Estella's defiance of societal expectations and her pursuit of independence. When was the last time you stood your ground, even when the world told you to sit down?
- **The Failures & Complications of Early Child Welfare:** Examining the systems in place at the time and their human cost. Have you ever witnessed someone fall through the cracks of a system meant to help them?
- **Poverty, Morality, and Survival:** The choices made under extreme duress. Can you remember a moment when fear, pressure, or heartbreak forced you to act before you were ready?
- **Transformation & Resilience:** How individuals and families adapt and change through hardship. Have you ever looked back and realized that the hardest season also revealed your greatest strength?

Discussion Questions

1. Estella's journey begins with profound abandonment. How does this inciting incident shape her character and decisions throughout the novel? How would this make you feel placed in these circumstances?
2. The novel vividly contrasts early 20th-century Philadelphia with Lancaster Amish Country. How do these two settings influence the characters' lives and choices? What details stood out to you in each?
3. The separation of Estella from her children, and of the children from each other, is central to the plot. Discuss the emotional impact of these separations on Estella, Frances, John, and Florence.
4. Florence is raised in an Amish family, a culture starkly different from her birth family's. How do you think this upbringing affected her sense of identity? What challenges do you anticipate (or observe) in her eventual reunion with Estella?
5. Estella's decision to work in banking was highly unconventional for a woman of her time. How does this pursuit of independence contribute to her character arc? What obstacles did she face, and how did she overcome them?

6. The novel touches on the early child welfare system. What were your thoughts on how it operated and its consequences for families like Estella's? How has our understanding of child welfare evolved since this period?
7. The book is described as a "poignant tribute to maternal strength." In what ways does Estella embody this strength? Were there moments where you questioned her choices, and why?
8. Consider the role of supporting characters like Frances, John, and Estella's allies (Stephen, Ruth, the Murphys, etc.). How do they contribute to Estella's journey and the overall narrative?
9. "The Philadelphia Matriarch" is inspired by true events. How does knowing this impact your reading experience? What aspects felt particularly authentic or moving?
10. The novel explores themes of memory, love, and identity during long separations. How do these themes play out for Estella and Florence, particularly in their reunion?
11. The early 20th century was a time of significant social change (WWI, suffrage, Prohibition). How do these historical events serve as a backdrop or directly influence the characters' lives?
12. If you could ask Estella one question after finishing the book, what would it be?

Explore the Era

To deepen your understanding of *The Philadelphia Matriarch*, consider exploring these historical topics:

- **Philadelphia in the 1910s-1920s:** Research the city's industry, social life, architecture, and immigrant communities during this period. ([Click for more information](#))
- **Early Child Welfare & Orphanages:** Learn about the history of child removal and foster care systems in the early 20th century. ([Click for more information](#))
- **Women in the Workforce (Early 20th Century):** Investigate the challenges and triumphs of women entering non-traditional roles, particularly in banking. ([Click for more information](#))
- **The Amish in Pennsylvania:** Delve into their history, traditions, and interactions with "English" society in the early 20th century. ([Click for more information](#))
- **The Roaring Twenties & Prohibition:** Understand the cultural shifts, economic boom, and social movements of the era. ([Click for more information](#))

Recommended Foods & Beverages

[Soft Pretzel Knots](#) – Nothing shouts Philadelphia more than the famous soft pretzel.

[Classic Club Sandwich](#) – Cut into small bite sized squares

[Mini Shoofly Pies](#) – Cupcake sized for a tasty Amish treat

[Whoopie Pies](#) – A decadent rich chocolate treat with a creamy filling

[Birch beer](#) or Root beer (both are non-alcoholic)

[Clover Club Cocktail](#) – Similar to a pink lady, this pre-Prohibition classic is one of Philadelphia's greatest contributions to cocktail history

About the Author



Beth Brubaker weaves words with the same grace she once brought to the ice as a professional figure skating coach. A poet at heart and a storyteller by nature, she blends history and emotion into tales that echo through time. With an M.Ed. and years spent guiding young minds as an elementary school teacher, she now turns her pen to stories of strength, family, and faith. Her memoir, *A Leap of Faith*, is a testament to life's unexpected turns, and her new novel, *The Philadelphia Matriarch*, captures the enduring power of legacy. Beth lives by the sea in Fernandina Beach, Florida, with her husband of 32 years, a retired naval officer. Together, they've raised two children and a lifetime of stories.

Praise for *The Philadelphia Matriarch*

This is a story of endurance in the face of hardship, of a woman who finds the courage to rebuild after her world has been torn apart. The Philadelphia Matriarch is a moving testament to the power of a mother's love and the lengths one woman will go to reclaim her family—and her future. Get ready for an unforgettable journey! —Terri Britt, Former Miss USA, TEDx Speaker, Award-winning Author of The Enlightened Mom, & founder of Women Leaders of Love.

I hope you enjoy your discussion of *The Philadelphia Matriarch*!