

The Romance Reader Reading Guide

1. Rachel's father states, "A Jew...is never liked by other nations. A Jew reads only Jewish books and must remain separate." He's arguing against assimilation. What are the draw backs to remaining separate? What are the benefits? Is there a middle ground? Do you agree with his perspective?
2. Compare and contrast Hasidic Judaism with other religious communities in the United States and Internationally.
3. Rachel notices her mother seems "not so alone" in Williamsburg. Who shows loneliness in *The Romance Reader*? How does it manifest itself? How do the different characters deal with loneliness?
4. Who would you say is the most fearful in this book? Why? Of what is that character afraid?
5. *The Romance Reader* presents multiple examples of cross cultural miscommunication/conflicts. Which ones did you find most intriguing? Why?
6. Rachel states, "Maybe if you believe in something it becomes true." What are beliefs she has that come true. Does she have beliefs that don't come true?
7. How did the author's use of Yiddish terms enhance or detract from the story? Would you make changes to the use of language?
8. As a young adult, Rachel struggles to form her identity. Which elements of various communities does she claim as part of herself and which does she reject? Has she changed by the end of the book? Why or why not?
9. Rachel anticipates that her marriage will liberate her from her family's rules. In what ways are her expectations fulfilled. In what ways is she disappointed?
10. Does the author fully develop all her characters? Who would you like to have learned more about? Are there any extraneous characters?
11. Do you think the title, *The Romance Reader*, captures the essence of this story? Would you call it something else?