

ALICE I HAVE BEEN by Melanie Benjamin

Few works of literature are as universally beloved as *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Now, in this spellbinding historical novel, we meet the young girl whose bright spirit sent her on an unforgettable trip down the rabbit hole—and the grown woman whose story is no less enthralling.

The questions and discussion topics that follow are intended to enhance your reading of Melanie Benjamin's *ALICE I HAVE BEEN*.

Discussion Questions:

1. What social forces motivate each of the characters to deny Dodgson's inappropriate attention to Alice?
2. Alice became famous through no fault of her own. Can you come up with a modern day version of Alice? How do their lives compare?
3. Alice refuses to read *Alice in Wonderland* until she is well into her eighties. Why do you think she avoids reading the story she inspired?
4. The relationships between Alice and her sisters Ina and Edith range from rivalry to a life-long bond. What effects do these have on Alice, and what are the consequences?
5. What part of the book speaks to you and your experiences in life?
6. How does Benjamin take both the reader and Alice from ignorance and denial to the self-realization of her complicity in the ruptured friendship with Rev. Dodgson? Is this believable?
7. While Alice's sister lies dying, Mama asks Alice "Why couldn't it be you? You've never brought me anything but pain, while she has brought me nothing but joy". What kind of effect do you think this has on Alice for the rest of her life? Did it affect the way Alice thought of her own children?
8. The photos Lewis Carroll (or the Rev. Charles Lutwidge Dodgson) took of Alice Liddell capture a look that can be described as wise beyond her years - what do you think is behind that look?
9. How much did the Victorian setting play a role in this book?
10. Before reading Benjamin's novel, had you already read *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*? If so, does it make you want to read it again? Why or why not?

11. What do you think of an author writing a biographical novel using only notes and references and filling in the gaps with intelligent supposition?