

## Book Club Questions for *My Counterfeit Self*

In order to provide book clubs with thought-provoking questions, it is necessary to reveal important aspects of the plot. We suggest that you finish the book before you read on.

- How did you experience the book? Were you engaged immediately, or did it take you a while to get into it?
- Which character – including the supporting cast – did you feel the most empathy towards?
- Were there any characters you loved to hate?
- Did the book take you outside your comfort zone?
- The novel spans seventy years. What were the key social changes during this period? Were there any social changes that you feel should have been highlighted but were overlooked?
- Much of the first part of the story is set in Lucy's fourth-floor bedroom. In what ways does the way her world shrinks affect her?
- What impact does Judy's fear of imperfection have on her behaviour, both as a child and later as an adult?
- Did you feel that Lucy's sense that she had been abandoned by her parents after her illness was justified?
- Lucy tells Philip Harrington that knowing you've dodged death is a defining moment. How did it define her?
- What do you think the book had to say about survival and being a survivor?
- In this book, Jane re-visits the theme of identity as being complex, taking on board the idea that it is possible for a person to reinvent themselves entirely. How successful was Lucy in leaving her past behind?
- We are introduced to Pamela as Lucy's governess. What role does she play later in the book?
  - Is teaching Lucy to stand up for what she believes to be right, even at personal expense, the most important lesson Pamela teaches Lucy?
  - Dominic can be arrogant, selfish and unthinking. Why do you think Lucy was so attracted to him? And why couldn't she give him up?
  - To what extent do you agree with Pamela's statement that if a relationship has to be secret you shouldn't be in it?
  - *'Here. This is what I look like on the inside, I make a gift of my soul to you.'* Is there always a risk involved in making art?
  - Out of Dominic and Ralph, who do you think made the greater contribution to Lucy's success?
  - Lucy hates the Famous Poet, but she also hates the fact that he might be right. She was good, but it couldn't be said that she was more talented than any number of undiscovered poets who lived and breathed words. What does this have to say about the role of luck or chance in success? Did Lucy truly deserve the accolade she received?
  - How did you feel about Lucy's decision to marry Ralph? Did it give her freedoms and advantages that she might not have otherwise had?
  - Mr Furlong aside, were there any other characters you feel the phrase *having your cake and eating it* applied to?

- Lucy concludes that any success she has will come at a price. What form does that price take?
- How effective was the author's technique of using the chat show as a mechanism to move about in time?
- Why might the author have chosen to tell the story the way she did -and what difference did it make in the way you read or understood it?
- What did you think the central conflict was?
- What question or questions do you think the author was trying to find an answer to?
- Before reading the book, were you aware of the plight of the Nuclear Veterans? Did this book make you think differently about it?
- Lucy believes in peaceful protest, unless there is no alternative. What was your reaction when she struck Philip Harrington? Do you think violent protest can ever be justified?
- Did any passages strike you as insightful or profound? Perhaps a bit of funny or poignant dialogue that encapsulates a character?
- What did the title come to mean to you by the end of the novel?
- Were you satisfied with the book's ending? Did the novel leave any questions open-ended that you'd like to know the answer to?
- What do you think Dominic Marchmont's longest-lasting legacy was?
- If you had to halve the size of your book collection, would this book stay or go?
- If you could ask the author a question, what would it be?