



Daughter of Fortune

by Isabel Allende

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Discussion Questions

1. Love motivates Eliza to leave Chile for California, beginning her daring journey. In what other ways does love, in its various forms, propel the story?
2. How does Allende's imagining of the California Gold Rush differ from what you may have learned in school?
3. Eliza is half-English and half-Chilean—a fact she herself never knows. How does her mixed heritage and mysterious parentage unconsciously influence her actions?
4. Discuss the various meanings of the word "fortune" in the novel.
5. How might Eliza's experience of the Gold Rush been different if she really had been a boy?
6. Do you think the fact that Eliza masquerades as a boy alters her relationship with Tao Ch'ien?
7. What role do secrets play in the novel?
8. Rose Sommers is a study in contrasts: a proper Victorian spinster who secretly writes erotica, the guardian of Eliza's honor who once conducted her own torrid love affair. Is she merely a hypocrite or does she tell us something about the reality of women's lives during the 19th Century?
9. In contemporary terms, Eliza reinvents herself more than once. What might her life have been like if she'd stayed in Chile?
10. Contrast Eliza's fate with that of the Chinese prostitutes—also immigrant women of her own age. Is Eliza just lucky or is she responsible for her own destiny?
11. How does Eliza's journey transform her?
12. Isabel Allende, who was raised in Chile, is regarded as one of Latin America's most representative writers. Do the sections of the book set in Chile have a different tone from those set in California, or does the author seem equally comfortable in both worlds?