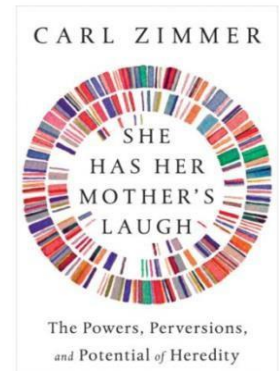


Discussion Guide

She Has Her Mother's Laugh: The Powers, Perversions, and Potential of Heredity By Carl Zimmer

1. Some reviewers of *She Has Her Mother's Laugh* compared it to a sweeping novel. What novel does it remind you of? How does Zimmer use human stories to bring the history of heredity to life?
2. What is the most important lesson that you take from *She Has Her Mother's Laugh*? Is it a lesson about biology, politics, or culture?
3. Do you feel like there's some important trait that you inherited from a parent or some other ancestor?
4. How much do you feel that you inherited through DNA and through culture from your family?
5. How would you feel if you discovered you were descended from someone famous, like George Washington? Would it change how you think about yourself?
6. Have you gotten a direct-to-consumer DNA test from a company like Ancestry or 23andMe? What was the experience like? Was it similar to Zimmer's experience with his genome?
7. The history of eugenics can be shocking for many readers. Do you see it as irrelevant to the twenty-first century, or are there lessons we should take from it?
8. Zimmer explores the influences of genes and experience on traits like height and intelligence.
9. Do you think we ascribe too much power to DNA in shaping us? Or are we in denial of the power of genes?
10. In the book, Zimmer explores the origin of plant breeding and current attempts to make new kinds of crops with CRISPR. Did those passages change your views on genetically modified organisms?
11. Would you use CRISPR to cure diseases in embryos? How would you feel if people used it to enhance children in ways that could be passed down to future generations?
12. Does Zimmer's exploration of cultural heredity give you ideas about how humanity can make the world better for future generations?



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