

EDNA O'BRIEN

Girl

1.

Edna O'Brien tells Maryam's story in Maryam's own voice. Maryam makes an incredible journey both in physical terms - surviving abuse, travelling - and in personal, spiritual terms - through motherhood, loss, and rejection. How does she survive? How is she transformed?

2.

What role do characters play in Maryam's journey? She is lucky enough to be married to a kind man. How does their relationship evolve? How do we make sense of this man's existence in a cruel system? Is he a victim too?

3.

What does motherhood mean to Maryam? What role does motherhood have to play in her journey at different times - from despair, loss, grief, and guilt, to joy and purpose?

4.

Maryam is a girl in a unique situation, literally a world away from the young women that Edna O'Brien has written about before. Yet aspects of her story - abuse, exploitation, shame, and redemption - can be seen in the lives and fates of girls in so many other places. Should this book be for everyone?

5.

In the end Maryam finds a place of peace and acceptance, although is forever scarred by trauma. Is 'Girl' ultimately an uplifting story, a tragedy, or both? How do the themes of redemption, grace, sacrifice and the human capacity for compassion relate to the themes of cruelty, thirst for power, and the desire to control women?