



Book Club Questions

A Marriage at Sea by Sophie Elmhirst

1. Why did Maralyn and Maurice want to untether themselves from 1970s British society?
2. Have you had a similar daydream of running away? What has stopped you from doing it?
3. On the Auralyn, Maurice and Maralyn provided different types of labor, with Maurice handling navigation and Maralyn taking care of provisions and bookkeeping. After the ship sinks, how is the labor between the two of them renegotiated, and why?
4. The acute stress of their situation unearths and intensifies parts of Maurice and Maralyn, good and bad-his self-sabotage, her fortitude. How does partnership operate to simultaneously reveal our innermost capabilities and exacerbate our greatest weaknesses?
5. Do you relate more to Maurice's pessimism or Maralyn's optimism? Who do you think you'd become under such circumstances?
6. Before the shipwreck, the open sea is a place where Maurice feels a rare sense of control and understanding. But how did Maurice's relationship to control-the very thing that prepared him for the sea-ultimately hamper his chances for survival?
7. Several ships sail past Maurice and Maralyn without rescuing them. What effect did these repeated failed attempts at rescue and dramatic fluctuations in hope have on you, the reader?
8. Maurice and Maralyn decide to keep a pet turtle on the raft, an act that helps routinize their days and give them a sense of normalcy. Discuss the role of routines in the book. In what ways do their different routines help preserve their hope?
9. To the surprise of Korean ship captain Suh, the night after they are rescued, Maurice and Maralyn emerge from their cabin to peer out at the ocean, missing what had become their home. What about their experience draws them back, despite all that they endured? Does the book upend familiar notions of home, and if so, how?
10. Discuss Auralyn II. How do Maralyn and Maurice channel, or fail to channel, what they learned from the emotional and physical hardships they endured on their nearly tragic first voyage?
11. After Maralyn's death, Maurice learned that "he did not know how to live." How does the loss of Maralyn push him to take charge of his own survival, in ways he wasn't quite able to when they were lost in the ocean? What is communicated in that irony?

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