

The Other Einstein by Marie Benedict

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Mileva Maric and Albert Einstein's marriage was a partnership of the mind and the heart. But is there room for more than one genius in a marriage? Mileva was a brilliant physicist in her own right, whose contribution to the special theory of relativity is hotly debated and may have been inspired by her own profound and very personal insight.

Discussion Questions

1. Discuss the various ways that gender affects the characters in this novel. Do you think gender would influence Mileva's life in the same way if she lived today?

2. This novel can be seen as quest for understanding, a search for the divine in the natural order of the world. How does the study of math and physics become this quest for Albert and Mileva? Are they, either separately or together, successful in their crusade? Does unmuzzling life's mysteries have disparate meanings to them?

3. Betrayal is a recurrent motif in the book and an unfortunate reality in Mileva's life. What forms of betrayal does she experience? How does her reaction to those betrayals propel the story forward, for better or worse? Has Mileva engaged in betrayal herself?

4. Discuss the setting of the book, a world on the brink of astounding scientific discoveries, political upheaval, and ultimately horrible World War I atrocities. Does this historical setting affect the characters? What role, if any, does it play in shaping their lives?

5. From a very young age, Mileva assumes that she will never marry due to her physical disability. How is this disability both a blessing and a curse? How does her limp impact her differently at different life stages?

6. Mileva and Albert are drawn to each other from the beginning of their years together at Polytechnic. What qualities compel them toward one another? Is their relationship "inevitable," as Mileva believes.

7. The loss of Lieserl impacts Mileva tremendously, yet she doesn't fully share her feelings with Albert. Why does she keep her devastation from him? Do you think she should have been more open with him?

8. On several occasions throughout the novel, the characters undergo metamorphoses. What are Mileva's changes, and what instigates them? Do some of them frustrate you or take too long? Does Albert change during the course of the novel? If so, how would you describe his evolution?

9. Albert Einstein is arguably one of the most famous figures of the twentieth century, but *The Other Einstein* shares a story about him that you might not have otherwise heard. Did this novel change your perception of him, or about the stories we are told regarding other women in history?