

READER'S GUIDE QUESTIONS – DON'T SAY A WORD – Barbara Freethy

1. Identity is a big theme in *DON'T SAY A WORD* – Julia's adoptive mother led a secret life, and Julia discovers, to her amazement, that she has a past she doesn't remember. Suddenly, everything she knows about herself seems to be a lie. And Julia's story is not that uncommon. With adoption, often comes the question of how much information the child should take with them.

Do you think an adopted child has the right to know everything about their birth parents? Or should the birth parents have a right to privacy when they give up their baby? How would you handle it if you were the birth parent or the adoptive parent?

2. Julia discovers a Russian past that seems far removed from her present life. Her mother was a prima ballerina. Her twin sister is as well. Her parents wanted to defect. They were involved with spies. It all seems crazy and yet in some ways very, very right.

Has there ever been a moment in your life where you didn't feel connected to the family you were born into? Have you ever wondered if you were adopted -- if there's some secret about your parents that you don't know?

3. Sisters play a role in *DON'T SAY A WORD*. Julia has a younger sister who she believes to be her half sister, the child of her mother's second marriage. But when she discovers that she has a twin, the relationship with the sister she grew up with is thrown into crisis. Julia's sister, Liz, is worried that she'll lose her sister to her past. Julia doesn't want to hurt Liz but also wants a chance to reconnect with her twin. She becomes torn between two sisters, who both need her.

How do you think you would react if you discovered one of your siblings was adopted? How would you feel if a sibling suddenly started searching for their biological family? Would you encourage the search or would you want them to be happy with the family they have and not go looking for people who are only connected to them by blood?

4. Alex also has to deal with family betrayal. He thought his father was dead. It turns out he's very much alive. He can't believe that his father would allow his family to mourn his death, that he couldn't find a way to tell them the truth. His father claims he lied to protect them.

Do you think it was a good lie? Does lying to protect someone bring some sense of nobility to the lie? Or is it just an excuse? Did Alex's father take the hard way out or the easy way?

5. Julia's engagement to Michael is faltering even before she meets Alex. Michael seems perfect. He's safe and predictable, but then he buys a house without consulting her. He expects her to move in and be happy. He's doing it out of love, he says. But is he really? Or is he just making a desperate attempt to lock her into a relationship as he sees her slipping away?

How would you feel if your fiancé purchased a house without your knowledge? Are some decisions too big to be made alone? Or would you look at it as a grand romantic gesture and be thrilled?

Hope these questions spark some great discussion!

Barbara Freethy