



Bella Fortuna by Rosanna Chiofalo

Reading Group Guide

- 1) Do you feel that Valentina has truly been "cursed in love" as she proclaims in the opening chapter of *Bella Fortuna*? Do you feel that she's been unlucky in general in life?
- 2) How is Valentina different from her mother in her beliefs of the mighty malocchio or evil eye? How are they alike in their beliefs of good versus bad luck?
- 3) How does Michael fit the knight-in-shining armor stereotype where Valentina is concerned? Do you think that is a large reason why Valentina falls in love with him?
- 4) Do you agree with Aldo's assessment that Valentina has put Michael on such a high pedestal and that no one can live up to such high expectations? Does that make it easier to forgive Michael's transgressions later? Do you feel that Valentina's expectations of Michael are unrealistic?
- 5) Discuss the concept of "forgive and forget" and the pros and cons of either forgiving and forgetting or not forgiving and holding on to a grudge. Do you feel that Valentina is justified in her refusal to forgive Tracy when she sees her at her shop? Do you feel that Valentina was harsh? How might Valentina have handled the situation with Tracy in her shop differently?
- 6) Valentina is close to her family. But we also see she has a special relationship with her neighbors and the people in her neighborhood. Which is your favorite neighbor and why? Which is your least favorite neighbor and why? Do you feel that the neighbors are an extended family for Valentina?
- 7) What are Valentina's views on friendship with women? Do you feel that her views were shaped by Tracy's betrayal when they were in high school?
- 8) Valentina and Aldo share a very close friendship and bond. How are they alike and/or different?

9) For most women, weddings are a milestone, and they want their big day to be perfect. Do you feel that Valentina has placed too much importance on having the perfect wedding with Michael? Do you think Valentina is guilty of falling more in love with the notion of getting married than falling in love with Michael?

10) What does Valentina's wedding dress symbolize for her? What does the dress symbolize for her mother? Do you agree with Michael after he has walked in on her gown fitting that she should drop the shorter front hem of her dress? What do you think are his real motives in wanting a more traditional dress for Valentina?

11) Do you believe that Sonia, the teenage fortuneteller Olivia goes to see, truly has "the power?"

12) Do you think it was wise for Valentina to go to Venice after her engagement to Michael is broken? How does the trip hinder her initially from moving on with her life? How does it help her to come to terms with what she's lost?

13) How is Stefano different from Michael? Why do you think Valentina falls for him?

14) After Valentina returns to New York and visits Tracy's mother, she learns that Tracy seemed to have changed her ways. Did you feel compassion for Tracy? Was it easier to understand her actions toward Valentina when they were in high school?

15) What did you think of Valentina's enormous gesture of giving Tracy's mother her wedding dress? Do you feel that her action has truly brought her peace?

16) Valentina regrets not having forgiven Tracy. Do you think she should have been more understanding toward Michael when he reveals the secret he'd been keeping from her? Why do you think she is not ready to forgive him? Do you think she ever will? Do you think they can ever be friends?

17) How are Valentina's wedding plans to Stefano different from her plans for her first wedding? Do you feel that she's grown?

18) What did you think of her choice in wedding gown to her wedding to Stefano? Did you like it more than the dress she was supposed to wear to her wedding with Michael? Which gown do you feel represented accurately who she was?

19) How do Valentina's relationships with Michael and Stefano mirror her mother's relationships with her first love Salvatore and her husband Nicola? How did much did fate play a role in who they fell in love with?

20) Olivia shares with Salvatore what Connie has told her about the Cherokee Indians' belief that each stage of our lives—childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and old age—is a different life, almost like a reincarnation. Do you agree with this Cherokee belief? How has Olivia reinvented herself in every stage of her life? How has Valentina?

21) How have Olivia's views on bad luck changed toward the end of the novel? How have Valentina's changed?