

- Sasha and his immediate family want to mourn his mother privately, but they must also contend with her colleagues who want to honor her in their own way. How do they find a compromise?
- Sasha is well aware of the difficulties his family faced as Jews in Eastern Europe during World War II. How have their struggles informed his personality and relationships?
- Even though his parents are both mathematicians, Sasha has chosen a different career. Why did he make that decision, and how does it change the course of his life?
- The mathematicians at the shiva are convinced that Rachela solved the Navier-Stokes problem before she died, and when they don't uncover the solution in their records, they set out to solve it themselves. Why is this equation so important to them, and why do they feel compelled to see their mission through?
- Rojstaczer includes excerpts from Rachela's memoir throughout the book. What do these pages add to the narrative? Why do you think he chose to structure the novel in this way?
- Rachela's brilliance is what draws others to her, and after her passing it's what everyone who knew her celebrates most. How else might you characterize her, given Sasha's descriptions and the passages from her memoir?
- Sasha's grandfather mocks him for reading *The Trial* as a child. What is his grandfather's objection, and what does this scene tell us about his family?
- There are several passages in the book in which Sasha laments the current anti-intellectual culture of America. Did you agree with his perceptions? Why or why not?
- Like any family, Sasha's family has its own "language." What beliefs or behaviors set this family apart, and how does Sasha embody these qualities?
- The events of this book largely take place over the span of the shiva. How does Sasha change during the course of this experience?