



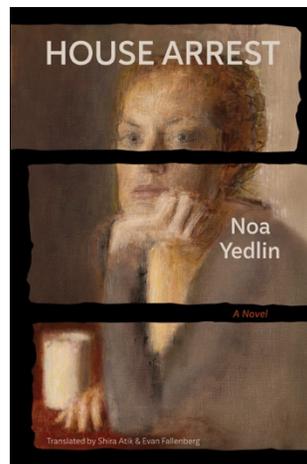
New Vessel Press

***HOUSE ARREST***

By Noa Yedlin

Translated from the Hebrew by Shira Atik and Evan Fallenberg

A Reading Group Guide



1. At the heart of *House Arrest* is the Fogel family, and the novel begins with a description of their home in Jerusalem. Discuss Yedlin's portrayal of the house and its surroundings. How do the Fogels use their home to define themselves? What can be gleaned from these details about their relationship with one another and with the public?
2. How does Barak differ from his siblings Daphna and Eitan? What do these differences tell us about Barak's character? Consider Barak's relationship to his daughter Alona and his ex-wife Yifat.
3. Elisheva Fogel, Barak's mother, plays an essential role in the novel. Do you think Elisheva is a good mother? A bad one? In what sense? How does her role as matriarch and figurehead affect her family members? What comparisons can be drawn between the image she presents in private and in public?
4. The scandal surrounding Elisheva Fogel plays out in the media, which acts as another kind of character in the novel. Discuss the novel's portrayal of the Israeli media landscape. How does the media heighten, distort, and intensify the "Hirschgate" scandal? How does Elisheva herself play into these tactics?

5. Discuss Barak's relationship to academia. How does his research affect his personality and his relationships, in particular with his mother and ex-wife? What is it about him, in your eyes, that made him ill-suited for academia?
6. "As a kid, Barak used to impersonate his mother," Yedlin writes. Does the adult Barak become an analogue or foil for his mother? What is he drawn to in Elisheva that he seems to lack himself?
7. Barak is 40 and still kind of lost. How do you think that the novel and its characters reflect his generation? Do you feel that there is a difference between Israeli 40-year-olds and their American counterparts?
8. How does the increasing sense of paranoia among the Fogels affect their dealings with one another? How does this paranoia change Barak, Daphna, and Eitan's impressions of their mother, and why? How does it change Elisheva and Ben-Ami's relations with their social circle, and at what point do the Fogel children begin to suspect their mother?
9. What does a nonprofit like the Hirsch Center tell us about the broader landscape of liberal Israeli politics? How does Elisheva fit into this picture?
10. Discuss the lengthy newspaper profile of Elisheva that Yedlin weaves into the novel. Why does Elisheva agree to take part in this interview? What does she hope to gain from it? What rhetorical strategies underpin the language of the profile? As a reader of both the novel and the newspaper with the interview in it, do you feel that she made the right decision in agreeing to the interview?
11. Consider the ending of the novel, in particular the scene between Barak and Elisheva in the bathroom. What is the novel's final attitude toward Elisheva, toward the Fogels, and toward the broader Israeli cultural landscape? How does Yedlin's tone throughout the novel convey this attitude?
12. At a certain point Elisheva reassures Barak: "People like me don't go to jail." What do you think she means? Do you think she is right? Do you think that Elisheva did it? If so, why did she do it?
13. Barak "had once read an interview with a writer who said, 'Only after your parents are dead can you write the book you really want to write.'" What do you think that the writer meant by that? What else can you only do after your parents are dead?

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