

BOOK CLUB GUIDE



From The Author

DEAR BOOK CLUB COORDINATOR,

Thank you so much for considering *The Queen's Cook* for your book club pick. As an avid reader myself, I love connecting with other book lovers and would be honored to meet with your book club as my schedule allows.

The Queen's Cook is a historical novel set in the time of Queen Esther. Having grown up in Persia where Esther lived and reigned as queen, and where her simple tomb survives today, I have always been drawn to this story. I moved to England and ultimately America when I was a teen. But I still feel a special attachment for the biblical stories that are set in ancient Persia.

The Queen's Cook is the first book in a trilogy that actually focuses on three of Esther's fictional friends. Although we hear from Esther through her secret scrolls, the heroine of this novel is Roxannah, a gifted cook who is the daughter of an impoverished Persian lord. After tragedy strikes, Roxannah finds a job in Queen Esther's kitchens. To her amazement, she earns the trust and friendship of Queen Esther, who is navigating treacherous palace politics. Life becomes complicated when a mysterious book and a sinister plot throw Roxannah and the royal physician, Adin, together. Can they turn Esther's worst enemy into an ally?

Since I love cooking and enjoy tinkering with recipes from



biblical times, having a cook as my heroine seemed like the perfect fit. Although this historical novel is enriched by a slow-burn romance, humorous banter, and a fast-paced plot, *The Queen's Cook* also has some deeper themes. I hope readers will find a profound sense of security in God alongside Roxannah, even when the world around them is shaken.

If your book club would like to chat about *The Queen's Cook*, simply reach out through the [Request an Author Call](#) form on the Open Book website to inquire about my availability.

All the best,

Tessa Afshar

TessaAfshar.com



Discussion Questions

1. Family relationships can be complicated. In what ways does Roxannah's mother protect her? In what ways does she fail her?



2. How did the death of Adin's wife change his life? What are some positive outcomes of that loss? Have you or someone you've known gone through a loss that alters the trajectory of your life?

3. Why do you think Darab finds such dignity and peace in spite of everything he has gone through? Compare and contrast it with Lord Fravartish's experience.



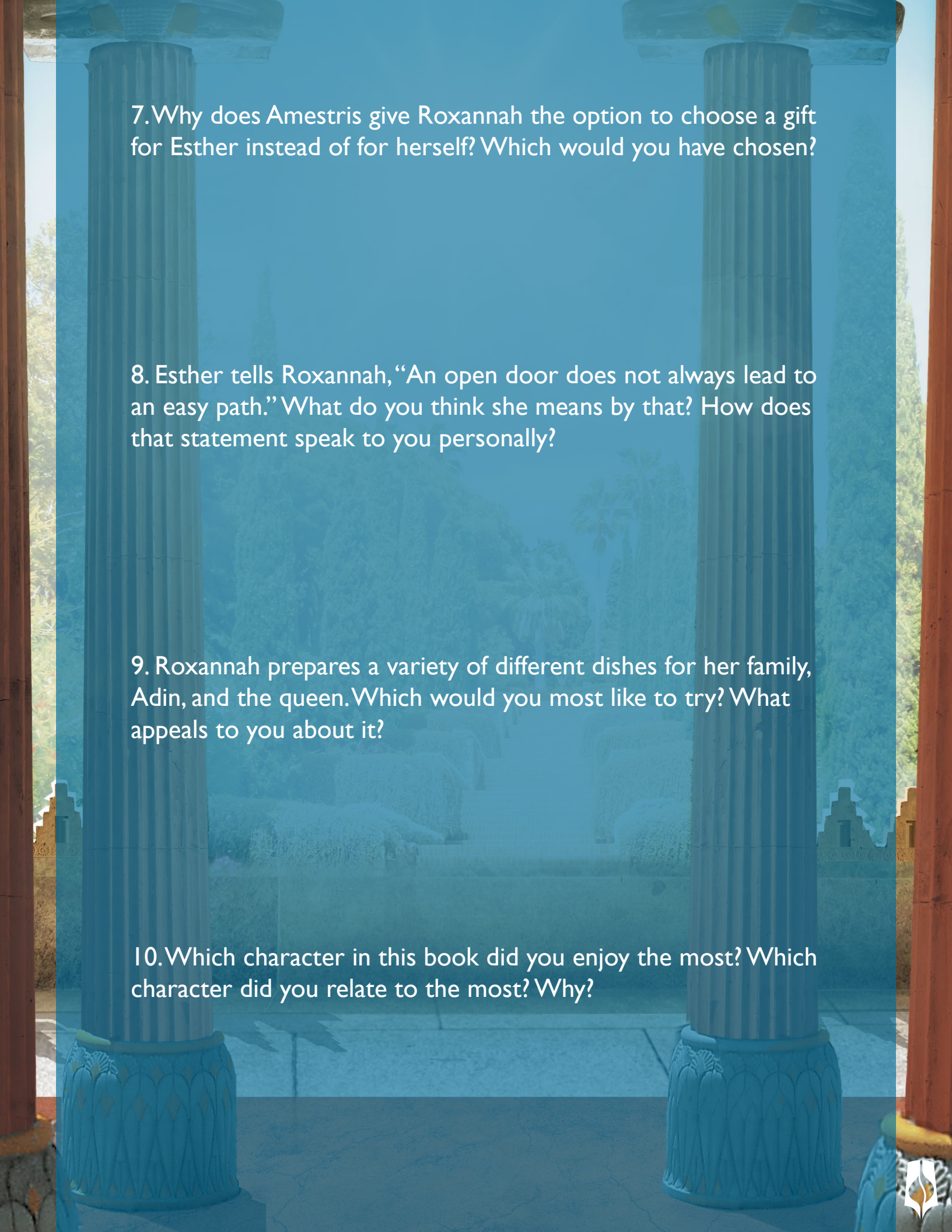
4. What is the underlying reason for Esther's fear of approaching Xerxes when Mordecai tells her that the Jews are in danger (ch. 10)? What do you think you would have done in her position?



5. Adin, Leah, and Roxannah each struggle with feeling responsible for Lord Fravartish's death. Why do you think guilt is such a sticky emotion?

6. Why do Roxannah's efforts to feel safe ultimately fail? How does she finally find a sense of security? Have you ever struggled to feel secure?





7. Why does Amestris give Roxannah the option to choose a gift for Esther instead of for herself? Which would you have chosen?

8. Esther tells Roxannah, “An open door does not always lead to an easy path.” What do you think she means by that? How does that statement speak to you personally?

9. Roxannah prepares a variety of different dishes for her family, Adin, and the queen. Which would you most like to try? What appeals to you about it?

10. Which character in this book did you enjoy the most? Which character did you relate to the most? Why?



Herb Kuku

INGREDIENTS

1/8 cup butter
1/8 cup olive oil
6 shallots, sliced finely OR
2 onions, chopped
2 cloves garlic, chopped
5 eggs
1/4 cup walnuts, coarsely chopped
(optional)
1 TBSP spelt or einkorn flour
1/2 cup parsley, chopped fine
1/2 cup fresh cilantro, chopped fine
1/2 cup dillweed, chopped fine
1/4 cup tarragon, chopped fine (if
you can't find this, replace with
spinach or more parsley)
1/4 TSP saffron, ground using a
mortar and pestle
1/4 TSP turmeric
3/4 TSP sea salt
1/8 TSP cinnamon
1/8 TSP cardamom
1/8 TSP clove
1/8 TSP pepper

Optional Garnish:

1 TBSP butter
1/4 cup barberries, soaked in warm
water for 5 minutes and washed
(discard the berries that sink into
the bottom of the bowl)
1 TBSP honey (or for a more
contemporary taste, 1 TSP sugar)

DIRECTIONS

Heat half the oil and butter in a non-stick 9.5 inch skillet. Sauté onions on low heat until golden. Add garlic and sauté for an additional minute. Add turmeric and saffron and remove from heat.

In a bowl, beat the eggs vigorously until well incorporated. (Some cooks add 1/2 TSP baking powder to help the kuku rise. Since we are trying to emulate an ancient recipe, I did not add this.) Add the rest of your spices and mix well.

Add the cooked onions and garlic and mix in your fresh herbs. Fold in the walnuts gently. Don't overmix.

Heat the rest of your oil and butter in the same skillet over low heat. Pour in your mixture and cover. Cook for 10–15 minutes.



Herb Kuku

DIRECTIONS (CONT.)

You are looking for the sides to look set. Flip over onto a cookie sheet and return to the pan to cook the other side for another 5–7 minutes. (You might need to add a touch more butter.) You can also cut the kuku in half to help you return it to the pan.

For garnish, sauté the barberries in the butter with honey for 2–3 minutes, stirring occasionally until the berries grow translucent. Serve the kuku warm with the barberries on top. Heavenly aroma and flavors that burst into your mouth are about to greet you! Enjoy!



Word Search

Find the following words from the Book of Esther in this word search puzzle:

Ahasuerus
Anger
Banquet

Cosmetics
Crown
Esther

Feast
Foe
Gallows

Purim
Queen
Scepter

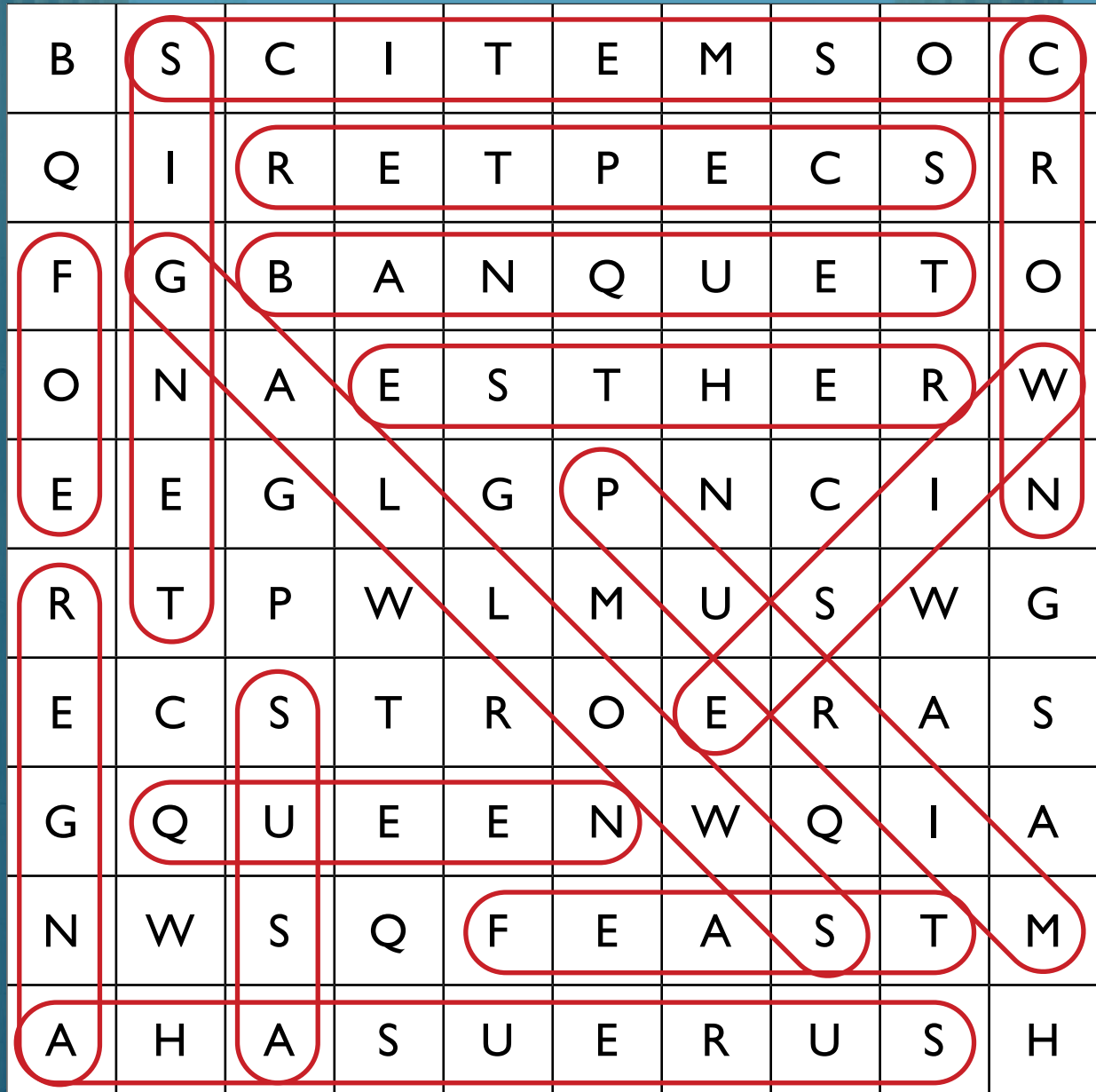
Signet
Susa
Wise

B	S	C	I	T	E	M	S	O	C
Q	I	R	E	T	P	E	C	S	R
F	G	B	A	N	Q	U	E	T	O
O	N	A	E	S	T	H	E	R	W
E	E	G	L	G	P	N	C	I	N
R	T	P	W	L	M	U	S	W	G
E	C	S	T	R	O	E	R	A	S
G	Q	U	E	E	N	W	Q	I	A
N	W	S	Q	F	E	A	S	T	M
A	H	A	S	U	E	R	U	S	H



Word Search

Answers



An Open Book

Do you lead a book club? Register for An Open Book program and get book recommendations, exclusive discussion guides, author Q&As, giveaways, printable extras, and other fabulous book club resources! Sign up here:

BethanyHouseOpenBook.com/Register-Your-Book-Club

Scan Here



BOOK GROUP
RESOURCES

