

The Remarkable Rise of Eliza Jumel: A Story of Marriage and Money in the Early Republic (Chicago Review Press, November 1, 2015). ISBN: 9781613733806. www.MmeJumel.com

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Discussion Guide

1. Eliza began working as a servant in Providence, Rhode Island, at the age of ten. What were some of the ways that town officers supported (or avoided supporting) the poor in eighteenth-century New England? Do cities in the United States use any similar tactics today?
2. What sort of work could ten-year-olds do to support themselves in the twenty-first-century economy? What jobs did you have as a child?
3. When Eliza moved to a new city or traveled, she took advantage of being where few people knew her to remake or modify her identity. How many occasions can you think of when she did so? Was she successful? Have you used times when you entered a new environment (for example, started a job or moved to a different city) to present yourself to others in a new way?
4. Do you think that Eliza shaded the truth or told any lies to persuade Stephen to marry her? If you think she did, speculate on what she might have said.
5. Eliza rose far above the socioeconomic class into which she was born. Why do you think she succeeded when most poor girls of her generation (including her sister) did not?
6. Do you think it is easier today than in Eliza's era for a girl to move from an impoverished childhood into the upper-middle-class? Why or why not?
7. What did you like (or dislike) about Eliza?
8. Eliza and Stephen Jumel's economic status was threatened by near-global financial crises in 1819 and 1825. Compare these financial panics to those that have occurred more recently. Did you notice any similarities to the Great Recession of 2008?
9. Eliza and Stephen Jumel were married for twenty-eight years. Do you think they loved each other? What makes you think they did or didn't?
10. After Stephen Jumel's death, Eliza managed her financial affairs largely independently. What ways did she use to safeguard and increase her income? Do widows use any of the same strategies today?
11. Eliza had a troubled second marriage to former vice president Aaron Burr. It was a costly business (he spent some of her money, plus she incurred legal costs when she filed for

divorce). But later Eliza benefited from using Burr's name. Overall, do you think she gained or lost more from the marriage?

12. Who do you think deserved to inherit Eliza's money?
13. Have there been any fights in your own family over legacies? Have disagreements about who should inherit what led to hard words or unspoken resentments?
14. Many stories told about Eliza have turned out to be invented or exaggerated. What are some of those stories? Why were they told? Are there stories told in your family that contain as much legend as truth?
15. Were there points in Eliza's life when you would consider her to be a happy woman?
16. If you could speak with Eliza, what questions would you like to ask her?