

# MISS ICELAND

## *Reading Group Questions*

- Living at home with her baby, Ísey wonders “What would happen if I strolled into the cloud of smoke [in the poet’s café] with Thorgerdur in my arms and ordered a cup of coffee? Or walked into an abstract art exhibition in Bogasalur with the pram?” What do you think would happen if she did? Do you think mothers are excluded from literary and artistic culture?
- Hekla is pestered by one of her customers at the hotel to participate in a beauty contest to become the next Miss Iceland, a contest that she learns is something of a scam. Do you feel that the novel subverts the idea of a “Miss Iceland”?
- Towards the beginning of the novel, Ísey reads Hekla’s coffee cup and declares “There are two men in the cup... You love one and sleep with the other.” The end of the novel finds Hekla married to Jón John, yet the arrangement doesn’t seem to make either of them happy. What kind of roles do men and women fulfil in this novel, and does it seem that sex and love between men and women are mutually exclusive?
- The novel is full of other texts that the reader never gets to read, in particular Hekla’s many manuscripts both published and unpublished. Was their absence from the novel significant to you? What did you make of the presence of women’s voices in the novel?
- Towards the end of the novel, Jón John declares that “Even if the world can’t accommodate a queer... it can at least find room for a female writer.” How do Jón John and Hekla’s experiences of discrimination and oppression, as a gay man and as a woman respectively, compare? How similar are the forces that oppress them?



- Jón John recounts how his mother once told him “When you move abroad to find your roots, you will call yourself D.J. Johnsson”. What’s in a name for the characters of **MISS ICELAND**?