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## Johnston Public Library Book Discussion Questions

### Lessons in Chemistry by Bonnie Garmus

#### Summary

Chemist Elizabeth Zott is not your average woman. In fact, Elizabeth Zott would be the first to point out that there is no such thing as an average woman. But it's the early 1960s and her all-male team at Hastings Research Institute takes a very unscientific view of equality. Except for one: Calvin Evans; the lonely, brilliant, Nobel-prize nominated grudge-holder who falls in love with—of all things—her mind. True chemistry results.

But like science, life is unpredictable. Which is why a few years later Elizabeth Zott finds herself not only a single mother, but the reluctant star of America's most beloved cooking show *Supper at Six*. Elizabeth's unusual approach to cooking ("combine one tablespoon acetic acid with a pinch of sodium chloride") proves revolutionary. But as her following grows, not everyone is happy. Because as it turns out, Elizabeth Zott isn't just teaching women to cook. She's daring them to change the status quo.

Laugh-out-loud funny, shrewdly observant, and studded with a dazzling cast of supporting characters, *Lessons in Chemistry* is as original and vibrant as its protagonist.

#### Discussion Questions

1. What is your overall impression of Elizabeth as a protagonist? Why was chemistry the right career choice for her?
2. She enters a male-dominated field and it's a constant uphill battle. Have you ever worked in a field like that and/or been in a similar type situation? Could you relate to what Elizabeth went through?
3. How did her unusual upbringing and violate relationship with her parents impact how she approached relationships as an adult?
4. What did you think about the eventual romance between Elizabeth and Calvin? Why were they a good fit, aka, full of 'true chemistry'?

5. Calvin proposes but Elizabeth says no. What was behind her reasoning for turning down the proposal?
6. Why do you suspect the author decided to include the viewpoint of their dog, Six-Thirty?
7. Let's talk about Calvin's death and how that changed everything for Elizabeth.
8. When Elizabeth finds out she's pregnant, she's less than thrilled. She never planned to become a mother and with Calvin's death, she's now all alone to raise their child. In what ways did motherhood surprise Elizabeth?
9. The story features a great supporting cast from the neighbor Harriet (who eventually becomes like an extended family member) to Elizabeth's producer Walter (who becomes her best friend). Who was your favorite supporting character and why?
10. Why did Elizabeth agree to host the cooking show? Why did the show resonate with women across the country?
11. Why did Elizabeth eventually leave the cooking show?
12. What are your thoughts about the reveal that Calvin's real life mother was the one behind the funds to Elizabeth's scientific research?
13. What did you think about the ending overall? What happens next for Elizabeth?

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