

Discussion Questions for The Riddle of the Labyrinth

1. Vulture blog describes this book with the following words: History, mythology, ancient civilization, linguistics, code breaking, Homer, Arthur Conan Doyle and brainy academics. Others use the words: nonfiction, history, mystery biography. What 3 words would you use to describe it and why?
2. The book is generally divided into 3 sections. The first section concerns Arthur Evans, the second, Alice Kober and the third Michael Ventris. Parallel to these biographies is the mystery of the deciphering of Linear B. What parts of the book did you find the most interesting? What parts were the most difficult to understand?
3. What did you know about Linear B before reading the book? What was one thing that surprised you about the deciphering of Linear B?
4. Margalit Fox has both a Bachelor's Degree and a Master's Degree in Linguistics. How do think that affected the way the book was written. Talk about her writing style and language of the book. Was the language engaging? Did it draw you into the book? Were unfamiliar terms and concepts explained?
5. What role did the illustration, maps, etc play in this book
6. Ms Fox writes obituaries for the New York Times. Some say that writing an obituary is like writing a history. She is also known for her wit in obituaries. Do you see those traits in this book? Talk about how they are similar.
7. In Fox's portrayal of Alice Kober it was said that " she was a victim of the time we was living in". Would you agree or disagree with that statement? Why or why not?
8. A reviewer remarked that the strength of Fox's book (her description of the work of Alice Kober) was also its weakness. Do you agree or disagree with that statement.
9. Margalit Fox says in describing the difficulty of deciphering Linear B " After all, solving a jigsaw puzzle is no fun, if you know what the picture is" How does this relate to the problems encountered in the deciphering by both Kober and Ventris
10. Discuss this quote as it relates to this book. "Sometimes you find yourself in the middle of a non-fiction book about things you never though you wanted to know about."
11. What are some things you learned about the time period in which this book is set that you did not previously know. Discuss the time period in history that each person in the group enjoys reading about the most and why
12. What did you like or dislike about the book that hasn't been discussed already? Were you glad you read this book?
13. What role did the illustrations, maps, etc play in this book?

Discussion questions generated from material in Min Book Bytes, Book Bundlz, Bellingham Reads, GoodReads reviews, New York Times, The Guardian, Wall Street Journal reviews, NPR interview with Margalit Fox, Vulture blog