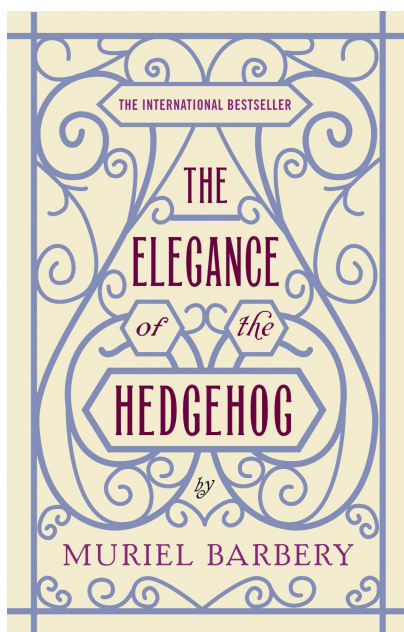


# The Elegance of the Hedgehog

## Muriel Barbery

### Reading Group Questions



1. *The Elegance of the Hedgehog* has been described as a 'life-affirming' book. To what extent do you feel this is true?
2. The story is told through Renée's 'musings' and Paloma's journals. How well do you think having two narrators works and why? How different would the book be with just one narrator?
3. Renée is an untypical heroine. Is she presented sympathetically? How far can the reader relate to her world view and personal situation?
4. As well as being very bright, Paloma shows great wisdom for a twelve-year-old. Do you find her maturity believable? How does her character develop as the book progresses?
5. What does the novel tell us about culture and learning? Are Renée and Paloma's enthusiasms presented in a way that makes you want to explore them further?
6. Friendships are central to the story. Is there one you find particularly convincing and if so why?
7. How important is the Japanese dimension to the story?
8. Renée and Paloma share a fascination with language that makes them acutely sensitive to what the people around them say or write. Are they unusual in this?
9. What does the book tell us about the influence that family and background can have on an individual's life?
10. The mood and tone of *The Elegance of the Hedgehog* are wide-ranging: from scenes of comedy to moments of tragedy. Has this added to your enjoyment of the novel, and if so why?