



# I Am Maria

## A Guided Reflection and Discussion Companion

*I Am Maria* is more than a book of poetry—it is an invitation to reflect, uncover, and embrace the deepest parts of yourself. Whether you're reading alone or with a group, this guide will help you engage with Maria Shriver's words on a personal level, sparking meaningful conversations and self-discovery.

### Part One: I Am Maria

#### Letting Go and Moving Forward

Maria shares how she first attempted to write this book more than twenty years ago but kept putting it down. She describes how forgiveness helped her finally move forward.

- Are there areas in your life where you feel stuck or unable to move forward?
- What role could forgiveness—of yourself or others—play in your own healing process?

#### Lessons Through Experience

Maria reflects that certain truths only became clear to her through lived experiences—truths she couldn't have understood until she encountered them firsthand.

- What are some truths you've come to understand only through your own experiences?
- How have these truths shaped your perspective on life?

#### Expectations and Identity

From a young age, Maria felt weighed down by external expectations—messages that led her to believe that simply “being Maria” wasn't enough. She shares how breaking free from those messages became a lifelong journey.

- What expectations—familial, cultural, or personal—have shaped your sense of self?
- In what ways have you challenged or redefined those expectations?

#### I Am [Your Name]

The title of this book is *I Am Maria*. If you replace “Maria” with your own name—*I Am [Your Name]*—what images, emotions, or memories arise for you?

- What parts of your identity have you embraced?
- Maria writes, “Each and every one of us has a different version of ourselves deep within us that's ready to be born.” What steps are you taking to become your true self?

## Part Two: Engaging with Poetry

### Poetry as a Tool for Discovery

Maria realized that her initial understanding of poetry was flawed, and that writing poetry has since helped her discover her voice and a path to freedom.

- Have you ever written poetry? If so, how did it make you feel?
- How has your perception of poetry changed since reading *I Am Maria*?

### Your Personal Poetic Journey

Each section of *I Am Maria* represents a different phase in Maria's poetic journey—uncovering, revealing, healing, and more.

- Which section resonated with you the most?
- Which stage do you feel you are currently experiencing in your own life?

### Finding Meaning in a Poem

Revisit a poem from the book that spoke to you deeply.

- What about this poem stood out to you?
- Why do you think it resonated so strongly?

### Writing Poetry from the Front Lines of Your Own Life

Maria encourages readers to “write poetry from the front lines of your own life.” If your life had a headline right now, what would it be?

Try this exercise:

- Grab a piece of paper and write three lines of poetry. These lines can be free verse, or they can rhyme—whatever feels best to you. Don't overthink it—just let the words flow.
- Read it back to yourself. How does it feel to express yourself in this way?

### The Open Field

Maria writes, “There's not good or bad. There's just humanity. Welcome to the Open Field. Welcome home.”

- Reflect on this statement. What does it mean to you?
- If you could meet someone important to you in the Open Field, who would it be, and what would you talk about?

### Maria's Recommended Poetry Collections:

- *Devotions* by Mary Oliver
- *Clarity & Connection* by Yung Pueblo
- *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson* edited by Thomas H. Johnson
- *Heart Talk* by Cleo Wade
- Add your own favorite poetry collection here!