

Elizabeth Gilbert:

The Introduction, the Author's Note at the beginning of the book and the text about the author's life at the end of the book are all good as an introduction to the book. There is also a list of all the people who play a role in the book so that we don't get confused.

Under the title of **'Beginning'** we find on page 1: *"I am finally old enough to know what is good for me. I have decided to spend this year without a man in my life. I am not looking for a relationship. I am looking for the kind of healing and peace that can only come from being alone."*

1) Talk to each other about when being alone is good and when it isn't!

2) In the original she writes:

*Not to mention that I have finally arrived at that age where a woman starts to question whether the wisest way to get over the loss of one beautiful brown-eyed young man is indeed to promptly invite another one into her bed. This is why I have been alone for many months now. This is why, in fact, I have decided to spend this entire year in celibacy.*

*To which the savvy (wise, clever, savant) observer might inquire: "Then why did you come to Italy?"*

*To which I can only reply—especially when looking across the table at handsome Gio- vanni—"Excellent question."*

Do you think 'alone' and 'celibacy' are the same? ( I didn't. I imagined something quite different :-)

3) Were there any statements that she makes which surprised you?

Or any which were very effective? ('My life still felt like a really bad traffic accident. p. 7)

Does she have a sense of humour?

Is she like a lot of other people with broken hearts?

Have you ever met anybody like a guru? (Any spiritual leader. ) The film about Pope Francis or films about Thích Nhất Hạnh? Who else? Recently I saw one which included the Dalai Lama at Bali Kino.)

Have you ever thought about asking ONE question? (In fairy tales it's always three, isn't it?)

Is the idea of wanting all three experiences greedy or acceptable if you are looking for a balance in your life?

## Before reading (pp. 13 - 21) : Italy

With your partner:

- talk about Italian food in general
- and in particular what recipes you know
- does eating making you feel comfortable and even happy?

## When you think about travelling -

- do you like travelling? Visiting new places?
- do you prepare beforehand, read quite a bit?
- are you in a hurry to get somewhere?
- can you pack light?
- do you make friends with people who are also travelling?

She wants to learn Italian because it is so beautiful. Why are you in this group?

Look at the picture on page 17 (even if it is a terrible picture!) After the sunset, she says, she starts thinking too much. I don't think it's the sunset that makes her sad. Do you agree with me?

She writes: *Depression gives me that dark smile, then sits in my favourite chair and puts his feet on my table. Loneliness watches, then climbs into my bed. He's going to make me sleep with him again tonight. I just know it.*

She imagines that Depression and Loneliness are real beings. Does this help you to understand her?

(Hoffmannsthal's *Jederman* is on in at Deutsches Theater.)

She writes in a notebook-cum-diary to sort out her thoughts. Do you know of anything similar that is helpful?

She says that she grew up on a farm and had never seen or experienced laziness at home. Can this be true of other ways of life, too?

What is the difference between pleasure and entertainment?

