

Discussion Questions for *The Maternal is Political*

1. What does the phrase “The personal is political” mean historically? What does “The maternal is political” mean to you?
2. Which essay in this book resonated with you the most, and why? Which essay did you struggle with most strongly, or feel most challenged by? What do you think might be the reasons for that?
3. *The Maternal Is Political* includes 43 essays by 44 writers, on 43 different subjects. But the subject matter (the relationships between motherhood and politics) could easily drive several more volumes. What additional political issues would you have liked to see addressed in an anthology of this kind?
4. Although a range of writing styles are represented in this book, the pieces here are, by and large, more literary than academic. How is the experience of reading about issues such as activism, immigration, abortion, and women’s rights, for example, different when you read about them in story form, as opposed to in a textbook? In what way does the presence of a personal narrator add to (or detract from) the subject matter presented?
5. Kristin Rowe-Finkbeiner, in the introduction, emphasizes the importance of mothers sharing their political stories. Do you agree that this is important? How much does sharing our stories play into the goal of making a difference in the world?
6. The essays in this book are grouped into three sections: Believe, Teach, and Act. Could some of the stories been placed one of the other categories? How much do these three key aspects of our political and mothering experiences—our beliefs, what we teach, and how we act—crossover and overlap in real life?
7. Several authors in this collection mention that the act of becoming a parent brought them to a new political awareness. In what ways did becoming a mother trigger for you a political awakening—or did it?
8. Do you think most mothers feel that they have political power? Why or why not?
9. How can we, as women and as mothers, encourage one another and make the most of our collective political power? What is one thing you can do differently this year, to help you become more effective politically, in order to bring about social change—or simply to make the world better and safer for your child(ren)?