

Spring Came on Forever Leader's Guide

Answers to Discussion Questions as Discussed by the Taylor Meadows Assoc. Book Club

Discussion Questions

Have you ever made soap with fat and lye?

Most of us had not actually made soap, but someone in our families had.

Are there other religious groups that encourage marriage "among the brethren?"

Many immigrant groups tried to maintain the "old ways." For instance, Mormons, Mennonites, Amish, and Orthodox Jews. History has a way of introducing change; for instance, young men going to war and meeting people from other states and other countries.

Was the Republican River flood as catastrophic as described? *

The flood was a true catastrophe and caused Hazel to re-evaluate her life and its priorities.

This book is not a biography, but do you think that the author has inserted characters and events from real life, drawing on stories told through the years by family and friends?

Mrs. Aldrich did model some of her characters from real life. Older folks in Elmwood sometimes thought they knew who they were.

The title is taken from a poem by Vachel Lindsay. Do you think this title accurately portrays the novel? Why or why not? A quote from the poem says, "Life is a loom, weaving gay indiscriminately with those of somber hue." Do you agree?

The group liked the title, and felt it described the book. And we agree with the statement about life having both gaiety and sadness.

The sand bar episode on the way to Nebraska City (causing Matthias to arrive a day too late to intercept Amalia's marriage), and the untimely arrival of the letter to Matthias from Fritz the day before the marriage announcement of Matthias and Ida both seemed to say, "this was not meant to be." Do you believe things happen for a reason, or is it just Lady Luck, or the Spinning of the Fates?

Stuck on the sand bar, Matthias' friend advised him to stay on the boat; there were still Indians around; plus, snakes and wild animals.

Did you want Matthias to swim to shore and walk to Nebraska City?

Answers varied.

Do you think Wilhelm's asking of Fritz to promise not to marry, but instead care for Amalia and Emil, was asking too much? Were you surprised that Fritz kept his promise, even when Amalia suggested that he marry?

Most of us felt it was unfair of Amalia's father to require the promise he made Fritz give; however, we admired Fritz for keeping his promise.

Do you feel that the importance of the marriage vows at the time, and of the promise not to marry are “old fashioned”? Or do we take both those vows and promises too lightly today?

Yes, vows today are taken much too lightly. And promises like the one Fritz made are typically not given. In fact, we are discouraged from exacting promises about nursing homes, for instance. Often, such promises cannot be kept, for various reasons.

Do you believe that first loves always have a tiny corner of our hearts, even if circumstances and/or deliberate choices take them down separate roads?

We felt that first loves leave a warm, happy feeling in our hearts. Now that we have all been married for many years, we know that true love gives contentment. (One in the group married her first love, fifty-nine years ago.)

Did you want Amalia to tell Matthias who she was when their paths crossed in Nebraska City many years later, instead of only exchanging greetings as if they had never met before? Do you think she hesitated because she was toothless?

We understood why Amalia did not introduce herself in Nebraska City that day.

*Facts about the flood. There were several creeks that fed into the river. On that day, nine inches of rain fell, and all the creeks reached their peaks as the crest passed on the Republican. Actually, there were two crests.

There were 113 people killed, as well as 41,000 head of cattle, 74,500 acres of farm land was inundated, and 341 miles of highway and 307 bridges were destroyed.

The Indians had told of earlier flooding. After this event, the town was moved, and the area became Harlan County Dam.