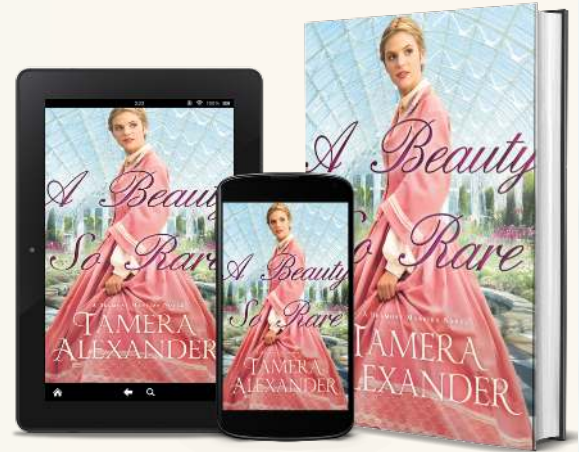


A BEAUTY SO RARE

Reading Guide Discussion Questions

Spoiler Alert: Questions contain key plot points to the story.



1. Eleanor Braddock is a practical, no-nonsense kind of woman. Could you identify with her character? With how she viewed herself both physically and in relation to others?
2. Adelia Acklen was a “real” person, meaning that her character in the novel is based on a woman who really lived. Adelia was an extraordinary, “born before her time” woman. What did you think about her character? About her relationship with Eleanor? Can you sympathize with Adelia’s opinions and her perspective on women’s issues and marriage? Why or why not?
3. Eleanor’s father struggles with health issues. What would you liken his disease to today, and have you ever witnessed this health struggle firsthand in someone you love? Which scenes between Eleanor and her father touched you most, and why?
4. Tamera uses a lot of garden imagery in this story. Are you a gardener? Did you identify with the imagery on both a literal and spiritual level?
5. At the beginning of Ch 16, Marcus thinks about how “every brick laid in the foundation of a life, however meaningfully or haphazardly placed, shaped the whole.” Looking back on your own life, what are some “bricks” that have shaped you as a person? Your values and goals?
6. At the end of Ch 17, Marcus reflects on what it feels like to feel far from home versus being homesick. Can you empathize with him? And the difference between the two?

7. Eleanor doesn't see herself as an attractive woman. In a conversation with Marcus, she responds, "Not everything has to be *beautiful* to be worthy of admiration." Discuss why you think she reacted this way and whether or not you've ever shared her feelings, especially in the light of the world's definition of beauty.
8. Do you like to cook and/or bake? Eleanor describes how cooking and baking allows her to "be still" on the inside. Can you relate?
9. Eleanor has an epiphany moment about the direction of her life. Look for the paragraph beginning with, "If anyone had ever told her that cooking..." Have you ever experienced a similar realization in God's calling on your life?
10. Marcus sees a work of art that was inspired by the parable of The Prodigal Son in the New Testament. Discuss why this statue has such an impact on Marcus.
11. We often seek to be filled and to have our own needs met, when it's something else entirely that we need. Discuss how Eleanor experienced this in her character journey. What was it she needed? (Pg. 274, look for "She worked the batches of dough...")
12. We often wonder why God allows such hurt in this life, especially when it involves children. Eleanor has some fairly accusing thoughts about God. Have you ever had similar thoughts? What does the Bible say about God's thoughts and ways (read Isaiah 55:9) and how does that relate to this story?
13. What do you think about the statement the professor made to Eleanor when she was a young woman? How would you have reacted had someone said that to you at that time in your life? How would you react now (if you're older and have gained some perspective on youth)?
14. At the end of Ch. 31, Marcus is confronted by *someone*. Have you ever felt this sense of confrontation within you? How did you respond?
15. Marcus desires to make a name for himself, to leave his mark on the world. What happens to him in his character journey? How does his perspective change? See

approximately pg. 360 (look for the paragraph beginning with, “Building a widows’ and children’s home certainly wasn’t...”).

16. What was the most surprising thing about this story? What character did you feel closest to?
17. Before reading this story, had you ever heard of Luther Burbank, Dorothea Dix, or Gregor Mendel? Do you enjoy reading novels that include real people from history?
18. In this story, two characters from the Timber Ridge Reflections series (*From a Distance*, *Beyond This Moment*, *Within My Heart*) share a cameo appearance. Did you catch who they were?
19. Through your eyes, what was the take-away message of this story, and what events/characters in the book led you to that conclusion?
20. What was your favorite scene in *A Beauty So Rare*, and what was your favorite passage?

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ADDITIONAL NOTES
TO SHARE WITH BOOK CLUB