

TO WAGER HER HEART

Reading Guide Discussion Questions

(expanded from those included in the back of the novel)

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



1. Sy and Alexandra come from very different backgrounds. Discuss those differences and how their varied perspectives shaped their personalities.
2. Alexandra always wanted a sister, a confidante. Do you have that in your life? How is your family dynamic similar to or different from Alexandra's?
3. Before reading this novel, had you heard of the Fisk Singers (or Fisk University) before? Do you share an affinity for music. And if so, what kinds of music?
4. Alexandra's mother states (Ch 2) how their world was changing for women. Discuss the changes she referenced and contrast those with today's culture. What advancements have been made? What common battles are still being fought?
5. We often assume things about one other upon first impression just as Mr. White did with Alexandra. Identify his misassumptions and discuss the challenges that come with making broad assumptions, both then and now, especially in regard to race and culture. Share specific examples from your own life.
6. The tragic accident at Dutchman's Curve in Nashville really did occur—on July 9, 1918. Tamera took artistic license in placing the accident in her story (in 1871) in order to include it in the historical fabric of this novel. But the majority of facts presented about the accident are true. "The Great Cornfield Meet" still stands as one of the worst railroad accidents in American history. Were you aware that there were Freedmen railroad cars? Discuss how social norms and discrimination played a role in the victims of that accident.
7. Sy's thoughts during General Harding's prayer (Ch 10) are revealing about his character. Can you relate to where Sy is in his character journey in that part of the story? Contrast his beliefs then with his later growth in the story. Have you visited any of the places he

and Selene Harding discuss in that scene (current day Garden of the Gods)? Share your personal experiences.

8. Alexandra meets Ella Sheppard, the real life character who was both Mr. White's assistant and the first black teacher at Fisk University. Discuss their awkward first encounter and Alexandra's thoughts and reactions from that experience—and how it served as a catalyst to their friendship.
9. Racial discrimination is certainly a core theme of *To Wager Her Heart* as are cultural differences and the ways they can divide us. Discuss the various prejudices you noted while reading and contrast those to current day struggles.
10. Mr. White, another true to history character, often quoted in real life "Anyone devoted to his books is on the road to freedom, while anyone ignorant of books is on his way back to slavery." Do you agree with that statement (both for then and now)? How have you experienced that freedom that comes through learning? Give personal examples from your life or the lives of others.
11. Alexandra and Mr. White discuss her lingering fear pending her decision (Ch 22), and Mr. White challenges her on how she's viewing her situation. Read the portion of White's dialogue beginning with "I fear the Enemy has entangled you . . ." and then Romans 8:35-39 and Hebrews 12:11. Discuss how you believe God uses suffering in a believer's life, and how He used it in Alexandra's and Sy's lives.
12. Standing for your principles takes courage and most always comes at a cost. What price did the various characters in the novel pay for their convictions? Or for the convictions of others? Specifically Alexandra, Sy, Ella, the singers, Barrett and Laura Jamison, etc . . .
13. Share your favorite character and scene from the novel and the impression they made on you.

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ADDITIONAL NOTES
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