

TO WHISPER HER NAME

Reading Guide Discussion Questions

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



1. The novel begins in Ridley Cooper's POV (point of view). Describe Ridley's character from the setting in the prologue, taking into account his conversation with Robert Green and Ridley's actions toward him. What characteristics (both positive and negative) would you assign to Ridley?
2. We first meet Olivia Aberdeen as she's stepping into the carriage that will take her to Belle Meade Plantation. What happens to her as she boards the carriage? What was your first impression of her as you learned bits and pieces about her past through chapters 1-6? What were your impressions about her marriage? And in your opinion, what's the most important thing to Olivia at this juncture in the story?
3. At the end of Ch 7, General William Giles Harding tells Olivia about Elizabeth's illness. Then in Ch 9, we learn that he is withholding this information from Elizabeth. Do you agree with his reasoning? Why or why not? Would *you* want to know your prognosis?
4. At the end of Ch 14, Ridley recalls something he heard from a passing preacher, "God never leans over the balcony of heaven and gasps." In reality, Tamera first heard Chuck Swindoll use this saying years ago, and it stuck with her ever since. What do you think about that statement? Do you believe God knows everything about the future, including your own? If you do, how do you think his knowing "all" affects how you still have the right to make choices?
5. At the first of Ch 16, Ridley is confronting Olivia about "appearances" and about how she responds in the way she thinks a lady should, instead of honestly speaking her mind. Why do you think Olivia is the way she is, in this regard? What factors contributed to that? And do you think there's a danger in being "ultra polite" versus speaking the truth in love?
6. In Ch 17, Ridley and Uncle Bob are talking on the front porch of the Old Harding cabin, and Ridley has a passing thought about how they're conversing like "some old married

couple.” Have you ever had a relationship like this with someone (maybe even someone you’ve just met), where you feel very comfortable talking with them? What constitutes a relationship like this, in your opinion?

7. In Ch 25, in a conversation between Ridley and Uncle Bob (pg 213-214), the two men discuss “doing what you were born to do.” What did you think about their exchange? Do you believe there are certain gifts you’re given— certain talents you were born with—that you have a responsibility to develop and use? Explain why or why not. If you answered affirmatively, what do you believe is the ultimate purpose behind those gifts and talents? Are they only for “you?” Or do they have a greater purpose (see Romans 8:29).
8. In Ch 28, Ridley and Olivia are taking a walk and are discussing God’s divine plan and how involved he is in our lives. What’s your belief about God’s involvement in your life? Do you agree or disagree with Ridley’s conclusion?
9. At the end of Ch 34, Olivia thinks about “perfect families.” What are her conclusions? Can you relate to them?
10. In Ch 36, read the paragraph beginning with, ‘ “*Mr. Pagette.*” General Harding rose from behind his desk. “Your persistence forces me to speak more plainly on this issue than I would wish...”’ What follows in General Harding’s dialogue in that paragraph was taken directly from the pages of history, from a speech Harding made. Discuss the views on—and acceptance of—slavery in the 1800s that was so prevalent in the South. Are you aware that there are more people enslaved today than in all of the transatlantic slave trade of the 18th and 19th centuries? What are ways we can help those who are enslaved? And is there something your group could do as a whole? (Tamera recommends the book [*Not For Sale*](#) by David Batstone for more information on slavery in our modern culture.)
11. In Ch 37, in a conversation with Ridley, Olivia alludes to have learning something from looking at Elizabeth’s life. What is it that she’s learned? Has “what she learned” ever helped you? Give examples.
12. In Ch 40, Ridley is admitting his past to General Harding. He has the following thought even as he feels his Colorado Territory dream slipping away, “...choosing to do the right thing didn’t always get a person what they deserved or even what was fair. The war had

taught him that well *enough*.” What’s a time in your life when you’ve done the right thing and then “gotten punished for it?”

13. Near the end of Ch 44, Olivia is walking through the foyer, passing the Harding family portraits, and she thinks again about Rachel Norris. Who was Rachel Norris? (And did you know that there really *was* a Rachel Norris and that she is believed to have been the relative to John Harding that this story portrays)? Olivia thinks about “a cloud of witnesses” in this passage. Read Hebrews 12:1 and discuss this “cloud of witnesses.” Do you believe *others* are watching your earthly race? And even more, are cheering you on?
14. At the very end of Ch 45, Olivia asks Uncle Bob to dance. How does he respond? And do you agree with what he says about choices coming at a price? What hard choices are you currently facing (or have you recently faced) in your life? What do you think about Uncle Bob’s advice to Olivia? How does she carry through (leading to the end of the story) regarding what she learned from him?
15. In Ch 55, beginning with the paragraph, ‘*Elizabeth smiled*, and the brightness in her eyes all but masked the shadows beneath... ‘ Elizabeth shares with Olivia the importance of a wife believing in her husband’s dreams. Read that paragraph and discuss whether you agree with her opinion. How do you think the lasting legacy of Belle Meade Plantation would have been affected had Elizabeth not believed in her husband’s dream?
16. Was the ending of the novel “satisfying” to you? What did you like best about that final scene with Olivia and Ridley? Were you hoping Ridley would decide to stay at Belle Meade? Or were you glad he held tight to his dream to go west?
17. In the epilogue, we catch a glimpse of someone from a past novel of Tamera’s. Did you recognize the character? What novel is she from? And do you know that in each of Tamera’s novels there is a character from a previous series featured? Sometimes the character isn’t even named (may be a brief, cameo appearance). But if you’ve read all of Tamera’s books, you’re sure to recognize them.
18. Who is your favorite character in the novel? Why are they your favorite? Do you have a favorite scene? What is it about that scene you liked?

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ADDITIONAL NOTES
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