

Deeanne Gist

BESTSELLING, AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR

YOUR EXCLUSIVE BOOK CLUB KIT

Tiffany Girl Questions and Activities for Every Type of Book Club

Do you love book clubs as much as I do? I've participated in several different book clubs and reading groups throughout the years, and one thing I've noticed is that each group has its own rhythm. Some groups love gabbing and gossiping between reading guide questions, while others like to spend their entire time together getting down to the nitty gritty literary details of the book they just read. I always have fun reading the suggested discussion questions at the end of books, but sometimes they're a little too "one size fits all." That's why we decided to create three different reading group guides for different types of book clubs.

Each guide includes a set of questions to get your book club talking, a suggested activity that will add more fun to your meeting and a food pairing to keep everyone snacking. Enjoy!

Book Club Kits For:

Wine & Chatting Book Club
History Buff Book Club
Your Average Book Club

Wine & Chattering Book Club

If your book club reads as many wine labels as it does books, this reading group guide is for you. These questions don't take themselves too seriously, and will leave you laughing out loud as you chat through them with your girlfriends.

Questions:

1. In the first chapter of *Tiffany Girl* it's explained that working women have to give over their earned wages to their fathers if they live at home. What would you have done as a teenager or young 20-something if you had to give everything you earned to your dad?
2. When Flossie Jayne travels to work, she has to fight "bustle pinchers" on the streetcar. What defense mechanism would you have used against these men with wandering hands? Would you have resorted to a slap in the face or a kick where it hurts?
3. Why is Flossie's father so upset about her living in a boardinghouse? What would you have told him if you were in her shoes to make him feel better?
4. Why do you think men were so threatened by the prospect of a "New Woman?"



Wine & Chatting Book Club

Questions Continued:

5. When Flossie first meets Reeve Wilder, he's very much opposed to the idea of New Women taking on a man's responsibilities. Do you think you could have been attracted to a man like him (at the beginning of the book)?
6. What do you think about the rule that married women weren't allowed to hold a job? Would this have been an issue for you?
7. Flossie eventually finds out that the infamous writer, I.D. Claire, is actually Reeve and his silly character, Marylee, is based off of her. Do you think her reaction was appropriate? Do you think Reeve understood why she felt the way she did?

Activity:

In true *Tiffany Girl* fashion, everyone should come dressed in something that would have been worn in 1893. Let's see how many of you lovely ladies enjoy wearing a corset!

Food:

Everyone loves a wine and cheese party, right? Why not try nibbling on some brie and crackers or cheese fondue while you gab about your experience with *Tiffany Girl*?



History Buff Book Club

If you like diving deep into the historical details of the books you read, this guide is for you. Sure, book clubs are a lot of fun, but it's always neat to learn something along the way!

Questions:

1. During the 1890s, few women had a place in the workforce. How did Louis Comfort Tiffany's decision to hire female workers in the face of a strike change that? Do you think it had an effect on where we are today?
2. Flossie grew up helping her mother work as a successful seamstress. Do you think that motivated her to value employment more than other women in her social circle?
3. We learn early on that Flossie is an only child, which is quite rare for this era. How do you think this affected her upbringing and personality?
4. The end of the 19th century is often considered a time period when men were "chivalrous" and treated women with the utmost respect. How does this contrast with the way Flossie and the other New Women were treated on the streetcars and on their journey into Tiffany Studios? Do you think the stereotypes that exist about men from this era are actually accurate?



History Buff Book Club

Questions Continued:



5. Residents at turn of the century boardinghouses moved freely from room to room, even if they had no business being in another boarder's space. How does this contrast with our modern idea of privacy? Would this make you feel unsafe?

6. Throughout the book, we learn that once a woman is married, she's no longer allowed to be employed at Tiffany Studios. How does this affect Flossie? What impact do you think it had on the real women living in New York in the 1890s?

7. Flossie eventually discovers that Reeve is the infamous I.D. Claire, and his character Marylee is based on her. Some of Reeve's articles about the New Women are taken from real newspaper articles from the era. Does the opposition these women faced from the media and society surprise you?

Activity:

This set of questions takes a step back in time, and you should to. Take a trip to a local spot that houses Tiffany glass so you can see the amazing colors and textures in person. You won't believe how beautiful it is! If you're in New York, the Metropolitan Museum of Art is a great place to start, but there are buildings in almost every major city in the country that feature Tiffany glass.

Food:

You'll need some sustenance when you come up for air between those questions! I suggest offering foods that were introduced at the Chicago World's Fair like Cracker Jacks or Aunt Jemima pancakes!

Your Average Book Club

If your book club is more diverse in tastes and preferences, you might want to go for the questions in the reading group guide provided in the back of *Tiffany Girl* instead. Here they are.


Questions:

1. What is the historic significance of Louis Comfort Tiffany's idea to hire women workers as replacements for the striking glasscutters? Do you think the move would have been as controversial had their employer and his project been of lesser notoriety? Would it have been as significant? Why or why not?
2. On page 6, Flossie compliments her mother, "every gown you make is nothing short of a work of art." Do you think Flossie's glass cutting or Aggie's foil wrapping are merely supportive to Tiffany's art or are they art forms in and of themselves? How would you define what is and is not art?
3. Why is Flossie's father so upset about her living in a boardinghouse? Explore the concept of a lifestyle that is "appropriate" for a woman of her station. What types of behaviors, tasks, activities, and even purposes are clearly designated as belonging to the world of women in the novel? What about the world of men? Do you find these boundaries logical, or are they rooted in something else? If you can, use examples to support your opinion.



Your Average Book Club

Questions Continued:



4. It's clear all along that Tiffany has created an enormous opportunity for both the Tiffany Girls and for the greater "New Women" movement, but in doing so also creates enormous tension. After all, the women's opportunity comes at the expense of the "hundred plus-men who were striking for reasonable hours and better wages." (p. 38). How does this factor influence your feelings about the situation? Imagine yourself in Flossie's shoes—what would you do?

5. What is it about New Woman that so threatens and offends men and women alike? How do you feel about the reasons characters give in opposition to the movement?

6. Flossie "merely wanted to be paid for her labor so she could go to art school. She had a hard time seeing how that was going to lead to the deterioration of the entire human race." (p. 84) Reeve's arguments against the women's liberation movement were drawn from actual articles written at the turn of the century. How do his opinions differ from Flossie's parents or the striking protesters? If you had to take a position against Flossie, would you go with Reeve's, Papa's, or the strikers?

Your Average Book Club

Questions Continued:

7. Identify some of the ways in which Flossie and other New Women suffered for their efforts to step outside of their prescribed roles. Discuss the dichotomy of the men in the novel who are against the women's movement because they want to respect and protect the "fairer sex" yet they mistreat the working women and even students. How did you expect Flossie to react to the men who harassed her? If you were a nineteenth century woman, what would you have done in her place?
8. Reeve acts out of deep hurt caused by abandonment and isolation in his childhood. In what ways does he re-create these familiar environments and feelings as an adult? Why do you suppose present-day society is accepting of depression, yet loneliness is taboo?
9. Why do you think Reeve has such affection and feelings of obligation toward Mrs. Dinwiddie? What is it about Flossie that at first drives him mad and then later drives him mad with love? Discuss these two primary relationships in Reeve's life and consider their differences and similarities.
10. Despite Reeve's initial impression of the New Women, he comes to understand that there are many reasons a woman may choose to take on a "man's responsibilities." For example, when he visits his childhood home he finds himself discussing finances with Mrs. Gusman. How does this make him feel? How does he ultimately come to grips with the situation? Identify some of the circumstances in the novel that necessitates women taking on roles commonly ascribed to men.

Your Average Book Club

Questions Continued:

11. When Nan goes home ill, Flossie takes it upon herself to make new choices for the glass panels she will cut to use in a nativity scene, and the results are not as she expected. What does this experience teach Flossie about her work and about herself?
12. Reeve thinks Flossie is spoiled. Do you agree? Why or why not? When Flossie berates herself for being selfish on page 320, do you think she's finally getting clarity or is she being too hard on herself? Do you think a modern woman would assess herself the same way? Would you?
13. Reeve seems to suffer from two main "walls": the emotional one that maintains his isolation, and the one that bars his understanding of what the New Woman truly wants and why. What begins to open his eyes to the realities that girls like Flossie face? What instigates the first trickle of empathy for their cause and how does he react to this revelation? Did his reaction surprise you? Why or why not?
14. Flossie decides before ever moving into the boardinghouse that all the other borders will become the large family she never had but always longed for. What series of events cause Flossie to realize that her "family at 438" is not what she thought? How does this realization change her? Do you think it's for the better, or for the worse? Why?

Your Average Book Club

Questions Continued:

15. When Flossie discovers that Reeve is the infamous I. D. Claire and that he has based his protagonist on her, she is furious because she feels he's made a public fool of her. But Reeve protests that she and his fictional character Marylee are not the same person. At what point does Reeve himself begin to understand this distinction? Later, how does Flossie identify with Marylee?

16. In many ways, this novel plays with the theme of perception, or how you see yourself versus how you are seen by others. What do you think the novel says about the weight you give to what others think of you? Do you believe there is value in questioning perspectives and ideas, either about others or about yourself? Why or why not?



How might the story have unfolded differently if Flossie did not challenge her own perspectives, or Reeve?

17. In the end, Reeve has what he always wanted—a home where he belongs. What is it that Flossie wants most, and do you think she gets it? Why or why not?

Your Average Book Club

Activity:

Do your very own *Tiffany Girl* Scavenger Hunt! See who can find and snap a picture of all these 1893 World's Fair inventions fastest. Breaking into teams of two or three will make this especially fun.

- Dishwasher
- Spray Paint Cans
- A Zipper
- Squashed Pennies
- Cracker Jacks
- Quaker Oats
- Aunt Jemima Pancake Mix
- Wrigley's Juicy Fruit Gum
- Stamps
- A Ferris Wheel

Food:

Tiffany Girl was set around the time of the 1893 Chicago World's Fair. Put yourself in the mood by snacking on the same foods that were introduced at this history-making event. The good news? Most of them are tasty AND easy. Here are a few ideas to get your smorgasbord going:

- Brownies
- Popcorn
- Tamales
- Vienna Beef Hot Dogs

