



ON SPARROW HILL

Discussion Questions

1. When Rebecca and Quentin discover Berrie's letters, Rebecca is more excited about the content than Quentin, whose relatives the letters would reveal. How do you think you would react to finding letters from a long-ago relative? Excited about the history, or only mildly interested, thinking like Quentin that such letters would have little impact on your life today?
2. The Victorian era is full of stories of philanthropic heroes. Beryl Hamilton, if she had really lived, would have been one. Do you think society has changed about how we go about doing good works? Are people more likely to give money than time, not both as Berrie did? What kind of philanthropic work would you do, if you had the time and the money to benefit a cause?
3. Lady Elise, Quentin's aristocratic mother, is perceived in the beginning to be cold, snobbish, easily dismissive of "servants" like Rebecca. Did you like her any better by the end of the book? Did your opinion of her change?
4. Quentin accuses Rebecca of being an intellectual snob, but by the end of the story he confesses he held her on too high a pedestal. Have you ever elevated someone to a greater height than reality requires? Have you ever placed higher expectations on someone else, or had unreasonable expectations placed upon you?
5. Why do you think Lady Caroline made a point to visit Rebecca?
6. What kind of relationship do you imagine Lady Elise and Rebecca will have in the future, when Rebecca and Quentin are married? Do you think Lady Elise will ever accept Rebecca?
7. When Dana learns she's pregnant despite having taken precautions against such a thing, she decides not to tell her husband right away. Later, she decides not to return to Ireland with him where she would have to spend her days in only Padgett's company. Do you think she made the right decisions? For herself? For Padgett? Her husband?

8. When Simon first arrives at Escott Manor School for the Infirm, he is aghast. If you were in his position, what do you think would have shocked you most about that scene? Sights, sounds, smells? How would you have reacted if you were Simon, having found your sister Katie at last?
9. Berrie was an outspoken, strong-minded woman living in an age when women were expected to be demure, saintly, subservient. She was raised in an aristocratic home but was willing to do the lowliest task to meet the demands of the school. If her character were transported to today's culture, can you think of a celebrity whom she would be most like?
10. Mr. Truebody is a stickler who thinks himself more important than he really is. Have you ever known someone like him? Worked for someone like him? What is the most God-honoring and effective tactic you've learned when dealing with someone like him?
11. Over the years, terms for mental retardation have evolved in order to ease or avoid the connotations that become associated with such terms. In Victorian times, words like "idiot," "imbecile," and "lunatic" were legal terms. Today it seems politically correct to use words like "cognitively challenged." Why do you think certain words become so offensive to the general population, so offensive that as a whole we begin creating new phrases to describe the same condition?
12. The theme of servanthood is prominent in this story. Are there times or situations in your life when you chafe against being a servant to others? When you welcome it?