



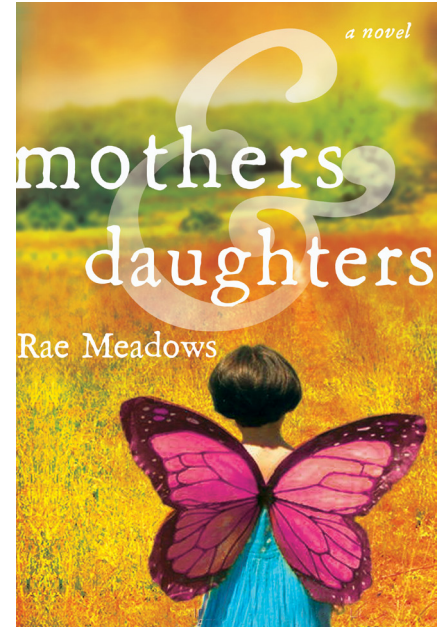
# Reading Group Gold

## Mothers and Daughters

Rae Meadows

### Discussion Questions

1. The novel weaves together three storylines, moving in and out through time and perspective. How does this stylistic device contribute to the storytelling? Does it help you better understand the differences and similarities among the three women?
2. We are introduced to Violet as a rambunctious young girl living in the early 1900's. She has an adventurous zeal for life—that is, until she is sent off on the Orphan Train. In what ways has Violet changed from a little girl to the older woman Iris remembers as her mother? Why do you think she has changed? How has she remained the same?
3. Iris tells Sam that women don't know what they will be like as mothers. Why do you think she tells her this? Do you think this is true? Do women really have no control over the mothers they become?
4. There are a lot of secrets that are kept by the women in the novel (ie. Violet's abandonment by her mother; Iris's trip to the Drake Hotel; Sam's abortion). Why do you think they keep these secrets—even from those closest to them?
5. There is a running theme of identity and self throughout the novel. Iris feels that she put up a façade as a mother. Samantha loses her will to create art after having Ella. Is losing one's identity part of becoming a mother? Do the women in this novel think that motherhood is worth the sacrifice?
6. Iris wonders if having children is a way to try and understand one's own mother. Is this true? In what ways have the mothers' experiences with their own children in this novel revealed insight into the way they view their own mothers?
7. Violet chooses her path and suggests being sent on the Orphan Train. "She wanted what her mother could never give her." Do you think she made the right decision? How would her life have been different?
8. Why does Sam go back to the Sunrise Inn to look for the young girl? Is it her own sense of wanting to be needed that drives her back? Does she see something in herself in the girl?
9. Iris sees motherhood as a duty to fulfill, rather than a natural instinct. How has she demonstrated this in her own role as a mother? How is Sam different than her as a mother?
10. Mothers influence their children by passing down traditions and values. What have the mothers in this novel (Lilibeth, Violet, Iris, Sam) passed on to their daughters? Their granddaughters?



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11. Iris has a deeper connection with Sam as an adult than she does with Sam as a child. Does there come a time when the divide between mother and daughter lessens as they become women—or does the mother-child relationship always remain?
  
12. Despite the apparent emptiness in Violet and Iris’s lives, Sam is ultimately able to live out the expectations they had for themselves—a deep and intimate connection to her child, a passion for creating, and a meaningful marriage. Do you think Violet and Iris would agree that their circumstances were worthwhile in the end?