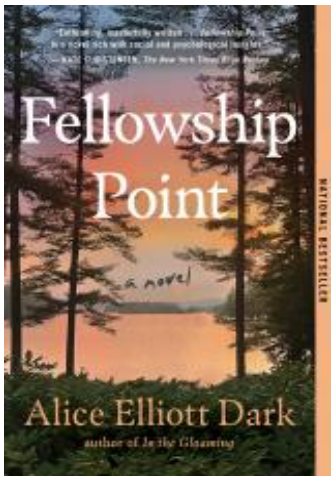
Fellowship Point

by Alice Elliott Dark



About the Book

The masterful story of a lifelong friendship between two very different women with shared histories and buried secrets, tested in the twilight of their lives, set across the arc of the 20th century.

Celebrated children?s book author Agnes Lee is determined to secure her legacy --- to complete what she knows will be the final volume of her pseudonymously written *Franklin Square* novels, and even more consuming, to permanently protect the peninsula of majestic coast in Maine known as Fellowship Point. To donate the land to a trust, Agnes must convince shareholders to dissolve a generations-old partnership. And one of those shareholders is her best friend, Polly.

Polly Wister has led a different kind of life than Agnes: that of a well-off married woman with children, defined by her devotion to her husband and philosophy professor with an inflated sense of stature. She exalts in creating beauty and harmony in her home, in her friendships and in her family. Polly soon finds her loyalties torn between the wishes of her best friend and the wishes of her three sons. But what is it that Polly wants herself?

Agnes? designs are further muddied when an enterprising young book editor named Maud Silver sets out to convince Agnes to write her memoirs. Agnes? resistance cannot prevent long-buried memories and secrets from coming to light with far-reaching repercussions for all.

FELLOWSHIP POINT reads like a classic 19th-century novel in its beautifully woven, multilayered narrative, but it is entirely contemporary in the themes it explores --- a deep and empathic interest in women?s lives, the class differences that divide us, the struggle to protect the natural world, and, above all, a reckoning with intimacy, history and posterity. It is a masterwork from Alice Elliott Dark.

Discussion Guide

1. Evaluate the themes of gender, feminism and domesticity in FELLOWSHIP POINT. How do characters, like Agnes, subvert expectations of womanhood? How does Polly, and how does Maud?

2. Early in the novel, Agnes describes the project of fiction as seeking ?to reveal what a particular person [is] bound to do under explicit circumstances? (6). Do you agree with her? If not, how does your idea of fiction?s project differ?

3. Do you think Agnes? idea evolves or changes over the course of the book? Alternatively, what would you imagine to be Polly?s idea of fiction? Maud?s?

4. The act of writing appears throughout the novel, often in different iterations. As readers, we encounter book synopses, letters, academic papers and more. Discuss the significance of this, taking into consideration the secrets characters are willing to reveal on the page, but not to each other.

5. Class is another theme in FELLOWSHIP POINT. Track where it shows up, and how, and explore its relationship to gender. For example, is it significant that many of the landowners in this novel are women?

6. Art, literature and the creation of both appear to be recurring motifs in the novel. Characters write, read, comment on art, struggle to produce it, etc. What do you think the author is saying about artistry in this novel --- especially as it pertains to work and womanhood?

7. Discuss the two epigraphs that open the book. How do they inform your interpretation of the novel?s different themes?

8. How would you characterize Agnes? friendship with Polly? How do you think that friendship evolves throughout the novel --- especially with the introduction of Maud --- and what do you think the book is saying about how well people know each other?

9. FELLOWSHIP POINT opens with a map of Cape Deel --- one that foregrounds many of the novel?s important settings. As a reader, did you notice any location that isn?t represented on this map? Conversely, are there locations that are represented on the map, but which then play smaller roles within the narrative?

10. Discuss the shifting viewpoints in FELLOWSHIP POINT. How does the arrangement of them, as well as the fact that we travel across time (from 2000 to the 1870s) and space (from Philadelphia to Manhattan), affect our experience of the story?

11. Evaluate the themes of conservation and environmentalism in the story. How does it intersect with the novel?s other themes, like that of gender? Class? How might you characterize the people seeking to preserve FELLOWSHIP POINT, and the ones seeking to redevelop it?

Author Bio

Alice Elliott Dark is the author of the national bestseller FELLOWSHIP POINT and THINK OF ENGLAND, and two collections of short stories, IN THE GLOAMING and NAKED TO THE WAIST. Her work has appeared in *The New Yorker*

, *Harper?s Magazine*, *The New York Times*, *The Best American Short Stories* and *O. Henry: Prize Stories*, among others. She is the director of Rutgers-Newark MFA program.

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