ReadingGroupGuides
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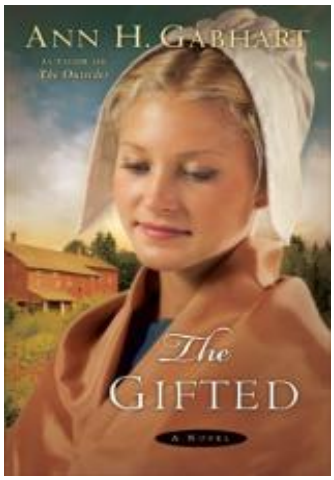
The Gifted

by Ann H. Gabhart



About the Book

Some dreams were meant to come true.

By 1849, Jessamine Brady has been in the Shaker Village for half her life, but in spite of how she loves her sisters there, she struggles to conform to the strict rules. Instead she entertains dreams of the world outside. When Tristan Cooper seems to step out of those dreams to entice her into the forbidden realm beyond the Shaker Village, her life turns upside down.

Will Jessamine be able to survive the storms of the world? Or will she retreat back to the peace of Harmony Hill?

Discussion Guide

1.The Shakers celebrated gifts of all types. One of the most desired gifts among their community of believers was the gift to be simple. What do you think they meant by that?

2. Jessamine Brady loved her Shaker sisters and brothers, but she struggled with the Shaker rules. Why do you think that was so? Do you think she could have ever learned to control her curiosity about the world and become a proper Shaker sister?

3. Sister Sophrena often asked, ?Whatever will we do with Sister Jessamine?? Why do you think Jessamine posed such a challenge for Sister Sophrena? Was it because she loved her too much?

4. Tristan Cooper agrees to court Laura Cleveland to please his mother and to shore up their dire financial situation. His mother says romantic love is not necessary for a happy and satisfying marriage. Do you agree? Do you think Tristan and Laura would have had any chance at happiness if they had ended up marrying?

5. Tristan pretended his loss of memory lasted longer than it did, and then he gave Brother Benjamin a fake name. Why do you think he did that? Do you think things might have turned out differently if Tristan hadn?t lied and had instead returned to White Oak Springs right away? Or do you believe he and Jessamine were fated to meet and would have met sooner or later either way?

6. Sister Sophrena had no regrets about joining with the Shakers. Yet she had sympathy for Jessamine and her struggles of wondering about the world. Why do you think that was?

7. Jessamine had long carried a romanticized idea in her mind of ?the prince who loved her mother,? that is, her father. Do you think that made it harder to accept the man her father was when he came to get her, or do you think it made it easier?

8. Jessamine is such a complete innocent since she has had such limited exposure to the world. She is, at turns, fascinated and repelled by the actions of the people at White Oak Springs. Which things do you think she might have the most difficult time learning to accept in the world outside the Shaker village?

9. Sheldon Brady gave his infant daughter to his grandmother to raise. Do you think he was right to so completely desert Jessamine there and not plan to go back to see her until she was twelve? Do you think he was considering what was best for Jessamine or what was best for him? What do you think would have been best for Jessamine?

10. White Oak Springs, a spa for the well-to-do, and Harmony Hill, the Shaker village, existed in the same county. Both thrived with very different lifestyles for many years and then declined and disappeared from the scene. Why do you think that happened? What do you feel were the most dramatic differences between the two places?

11. Partly because of his experiences in the Mexican War, Tristan doubts the existence of God. Do you understand why he felt that way? Or do you feel being in a war might be an even greater reason to seek a closer relationship with God? What did make Tristan finally reach for belief?

12. Jessamine had a gift of words and a love of stories, but she seemed unable to channel those gifts into anything the Shakers could accept as good. They believed the beauty in anything, whether a chair, a rose, or words, was in its usefulness to the community of Believers and not in how it might be pleasing to the eye or mind. Do you believe Jessamine?s gift of words was from the Lord? Does he open up ways for us to use our diverse gifts for him?

Author Bio

Ann H. Gabhart is the bestselling author of ANGEL SISTER, SMALL TOWN GIRL and WORDS SPOKEN TRUE, as well as several Shaker novels --- THE OUTSIDER, THE BELIEVER, THE SEEKER, THE BLESSED and THE GIFTED --- and *The Heart of Hollyhill* series. She lives with her husband a mile from where she was born in rural

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