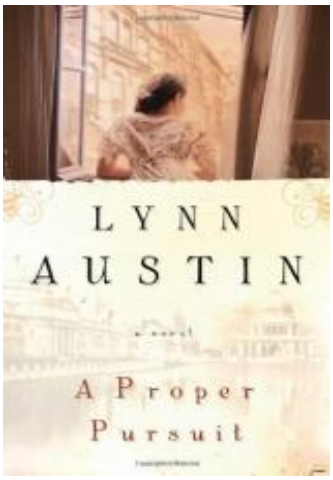
ReadingGroupGuides
The online community for reading groups

A Proper Pursuit

by Lynn Austin



About the Book

It seems a perfect backdrop for what Violet Hayes longs to experience: a little mystery, a little romance.

To be honest, it is more than a little mystery. She schemed her way to Chicago to discover the mother she barely remembered. As for romance? well, with the help of her grandmother and three great aunts, that is coming along nicely as well --- perhaps too well. Each of her relatives --- including her saintly grandmother --- seems to have a separate agenda for her.

In the course of a summer, Violet's world will open wide before her eyes. But in the wake of discovery, she must find a way to determine which path --- and which man --- will ultimately be the right lifetime choice for her.

Discussion Guide

1. The book is set against the backdrop of the 1893 World?s Columbian Exposition, which acts as a catalyst for change when Violet uses it as her excuse to travel to Chicago to search for her mother. What other roles and functions does the fair eventually play in the story? What part does it play in the novel?s climax?

2. Violet visits the Exposition with four different people (Silas McClure, Herman Beckett, Nelson Kent, and Aunt Matt) and has a different experience each time. What does she see and learn from her visits? What do her varied experiences tell you about each of her escorts?

3. Violet?s father worries that his mother and three aunts will have a bad influence on his impressionable young daughter. How would you describe each of these four women? How do they typify the roles available to women at the turn of the century? How do their personalities and life experiences fit with the work that they do? What did Violet learn from each of them? Do you think their influence was good or bad?

4. Violet seeks to understand and experience true love?guided only by the information she has learned from romance novels. What lessons and advice about love did she eventually learn from her grandmother and three aunts? What did she learn from her father? Her mother? How do you think each of these lessons will effect her future choice of a husband?

5. If you were helping Violet choose among the four men who were courting her (Herman Beckett, Nelson Kent, Silas McClure, and Louis Decker), what would you list as their positive and negative qualities? In what ways did each one ?use? her? How did she ?use? them? Which man did you like best? The least? Why?

6. In the beginning of the book, Violet seems indifferent toward spiritual matters and considers church attendance ?a chore.? How does her faith grow and change over the course of the story? Which events influenced that change?

7. Several historical events and personages are portrayed in the story. How are Violet?s and the other characters? lives impacted by each of the following? How was history impacted?

1. Jane Addams? Hull House
2. Dwight L. Moody?s evangelistic campaigns
3. The Suffragette movement
4. The Great Chicago Fire
5. The World?s Columbian Exposition and Woman?s Pavilion

8. Violet lives in a time when strict Victorian mores were clashing with the modern ideas and inventions of the twentieth century. In what ways does her personality reflect these contrasts? How do the differences between the White City and the Midway Plaisance reflect the different facets of her character?

9. ?Consider it pure joy?whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance? (James 1:2). Violet?s grandmother advises her to allow God to teach her through the struggles she faces. What lessons did she grow from? Which other characters in the story had the opportunity to grow in faith through their struggles? Were there some whose trials had the opposite effect?

10. Violet?s father said, *?I think parents are in a much better position than their children are to see the good qualities in a spouse and make a sound choice.?* What events and experiences in his life shaped this attitude? Do you agree with him? By the story?s end, what qualities do you think Violet would look for in a husband?

11. In the novel, Violet struggles to find a balance between conformity and individuality. How would you interpret this scripture: ?Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart? (1 Samuel 16: 7) in each of these circumstances:

Violet?s social interactions with the ?peapods?
Madame Beauchamp?s rules and advice on manners

Aunt Matt?s warning that wives must be actresses
Grandmother?s advice to be exactly who God created you to be
Angeline?s conflicts with her devout father-in-law
The prodigal uncle Phillip?s rebellion against his father
Violet?s fondness for romance novels and detective stories.

12. If you were to write the next chapter in Violet?s life, what would it be? What lessons has she learned about love? About women? About herself? About God?

Author Bio

Lynn Austin has sold more than one and a half million copies of her books worldwide. A former teacher who now writes and speaks full-time, she has won eight Christy Awards for her historical fiction and was one of the first inductees into the Christy Award Hall of Fame. One of her novels, HIDDEN PLACES, was made into a Hallmark Channel Original Movie. Lynn and her husband have three grown children and make their home in western Michigan.

Critical Praise

"... Austin delivers another agreeable saga that draws on America's rich, turbulent history and features distinctive characters. This sure winner will please readers who enjoy high-spirited, adventurous heroines and vivid details of bygone eras."

A Proper Pursuit
by Lynn Austin

Publication Date: September 1, 2007
Genres: Christian, Fiction
Paperback: 432 pages
Publisher: Bethany House
ISBN-10: 0764228919
ISBN-13: 9780764228919