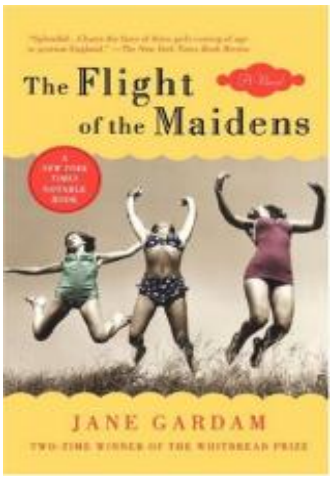
The Flight of the Maidens

by Jane Gardam



About the Book

In **The Flight of the Maidens**, Jane Gardam spins a captivating tale as she follows three young women through the weeks leading up to their departures for college. It's the summer of 1946, and the shadow of World War II lingers over a still-devastated England...and in the hearts and minds of its people, including Hetty, Una, and Lieselotte. Hetty Fallowes escapes the confines of her parent's house by fleeing to the Lake District to study and prepare for college. Here she receives her first taste of independence even as she struggles to distance herself from her mother and their alternately loving and conflicted relationship.

Una Vane travels the English countryside with Ray, a boy from the wrong side of the tracks. As she asserts her nascent womanhood and explores her sexuality, she begins to question the direction her life is taking.

For Lieselotte Klein, who "came from Hamburg and had arrived in England in June 1939, on the last train full of refugee children, the Kindertransport," the summer finally brings answers about her uncertain past. A journey to London and then to America allows her to finally uncover the truth about her German Jewish heritage.

As the three struggle to find meaning and love in a new world, they realize that they still have much to learn, and that their friendship is perhaps the only constant in an ever-changing world.

Discussion Guide

1. When the novel opens, Hetty, Una, and Lieselotte are sitting in a graveyard. Why do you think the author chose this setting to begin the story? What is its significance?

2. How would you describe Hetty, Una, and Lieselotte as the story begins? How has each one changed by the novel's end?

3. Lieselotte escaped to England as a child and was adopted by the Stonehouses. How would you describe her relationship with them? Why does she not even write to them while she is in London and later America?

4. Hetty goes to the Lake District presumably to study. Why do you think she chose to take this trip? How is she impacted by the new acquaintances she makes here? What does she mean when she tells Rupert, "We have the same sort of spirit" (pg. 250).

5. Lieselotte has been undeniably affected by the war, losing her family and having been displaced from her home. How has the war also altered Hetty and Una's lives, both physically and emotionally? In the beginning of the novel, Hetty says, "I have adored the war" (pg. 42). What does she mean by this?

6. Hetty has a contentious relationship with her mother, and at times even treats her cruelly. How would you describe their relationship? What do you think are the motivating factors for Hetty's behavior?

7. When Lieselotte travels to America, she expects to be embraced by her aunt, her only remaining relative, and instead it is once again a stranger who aids her. How is she affected by this time she spends with her aunt? Speaking to Hetty and Una about her the ring she received from her aunt, Lieselotte says, "It's my inheritance from my aunt. It might have been a lot bigger. There was more than the ring. Had I sold my soul" (pg. 273). What does she mean by this statement?

8. What do Hetty, Una, and Lieselotte each learn about the meaning of family, particularly their own individual families?

9. What is it about Ray that attracts Una to him? Why does she refuse to go away with him the last time?

10. All three girls embark on both physical and psychological journeys throughout the story. What is the single greatest event or factor that had the greatest impact on each of the girls?

11. How do you envision Una, Hetty, and Lisolette in ten years time?

12. One reviewer described [**The Flight of the Maidens**] as "charming, amusing, touching, and astute." Do you agree with this reviewer's assessment? Which word do you think best conveys the essence of the story?

Author Bio

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