

Book Club Discussion Questions for *A Veil Removed*

1. How does the author use historical details to enrich the narrative and immerse the reader in the era? Which historical details or societal norms surprised you the most?
2. Elsie's storyline involves her breaking away from societal expectations and family pressures. Discuss the various external forces influencing her decisions and how she gradually finds her own voice and desires.
3. Many characters in the book keep secrets, from Elsie's elopement attempt to Alcott's extortion and Bennett's knowledge. How do these deceptions impact the characters and advance the plot?
4. The book features various forms of love—romantic, familial, and even unrequited. How do characters like Elsie and Alcott grapple with their sense of duty versus their personal desires or fears?
5. How does the novel explore the challenges and prejudices associated with social class, particularly through Elsie's experiences and interactions with figures like Grandfather Exley, Aunt Agatha, and Lloyd Aston.
6. Ma's behavior and the children's situations (including the boys being sent away) are significant. How does the novel portray the different expressions of motherhood (think Julia, Mrs. Hennessey, and Antonia) and the impact of parental decisions on children's lives?
7. Alcott's death sets much of the plot in motion, revealing years of extortion and a hidden life. How does his final letter reshape Clive's perception of his father, and how does it influence Clive's future decisions?
8. How do Grandfather Exley's actions, including sending the boys to Phillips Exeter, reflect the social pressures and patriarchal attitudes of the time?
9. Elsie and Clive both have complex relationships with their respective homes and families. Elsie feels trapped at Palmer Square, while Clive grapples with his new role at Highbury and the legacy of his father. How do their differing views of "home" and belonging influence their actions and overall happiness?
10. Winnetka's police chief is portrayed as oblivious and dismissive of serious crime, while Sergeant Davis is sharp and competent. What do these contrasting figures suggest about the state of law enforcement in the 1930s, particularly regarding organized crime?
11. The 1930s setting allows for exploration of changing gender roles. Elsie's desire for education and a vocation as a nun or teacher challenges traditional expectations for women, as does Henrietta's aspiration for a detective agency. How do these female characters push against or conform to societal norms, and what are the consequences of their choices?



12. Alcott's letter reveals his long-standing betrayal by the mob and his ultimate trust in Bennett.

Clive also struggles with trust, particularly regarding Bennett. Discuss how themes of betrayal and trust are explored through the relationships in the novel.