

DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR **ALL WAITING IS LONG**

1. The title of this novel, *All Waiting Is Long*, is an old Welsh proverb. What do you think is meant by this adage? In Chapter Four, Stanley recalls Violet using the expression while they are waiting in line to see Queenie the elephant. What other examples of waiting can be found in the book?
2. The chorus of churchwomen who first appeared in *Sing in the Morning, Cry at Night* turn up again in *All Waiting Is Long*. The author describes these women as “flawed but well-intended.” Do you agree? Why do you think she includes them in the story? Do the churchwomen transform in any way by the end of the novel? How do the pieces of sex advice from *Woman: Her Sex and Love Life* relate to each chorus and the chapters that follow?
3. *All Waiting Is Long* is fraught with misunderstanding. For example, at the end of Chapter Two, Dr. Peters mistakenly assumes that Violet is abandoning her own baby in the cradle at the entrance, causing Violet to distrust the doctor for the remainder of the novel. What other instances of misunderstanding result in long-term consequences? Were these misunderstandings inevitable or preventable?
4. Was Violet obligated to keep Lily’s secret, even at the expense of her own happiness? Would Lily have done the same for Violet had the roles been reversed? Was the Widow right to keep the secret from Stanley, or should she have betrayed Lily for the greater good?
5. Once Violet decides to keep the baby, everything changes for the Morgan sisters. What would have happened if:
 - Violet had not gone back to the Good Shepherd for Lily’s hat?
 - Lily had decided to keep the baby?
 - Michael’s parents had not come back to claim him?
6. Did Stanley have a right to judge Violet at the train station given the time he’d spent in the Alleys in his youth and his more recent encounter with Lorraine Day? Morally speaking, should a woman be held to a higher standard than a man? Would Stanley have reacted differently toward Violet if she’d told him the truth when she’d stepped off the train?
7. What is the significance of Stanley’s artificial hand? Why does he hang on to it when he knows he’ll never use it?
8. How does Ruby end up as a prostitute? Is this a better life for her than the one she had before? Do you think she truly loves Stanley? What do you predict will happen to Ruby once the novel is over?
9. Does Violet end up with the right man? Does Lily? How do these sisters change over the course of the novel? If you had been the author, how would you have ended the story?
10. While we associate the term *eugenics* with the Nazis, prior to World War II, many corporations—including the Carnegie Institution and the Rockefeller Foundation—funded the eugenics movement in the United States. In *All Waiting Is Long*, the author shines a light on eugenics, specifically as it relates to women deemed immoral. As a reader, were you surprised to discover the popularity of eugenics in the United States? Why do you think this movement had so many supporters during the time period of the book?
11. During the 1930s, skirmishes broke out between competing anthracite unions, and strikes were called for improved conditions at the mines. Given the hard economic times, should the miners have gone on strike during the Great Depression? Are unions still relevant in today’s world?
12. How does the author explore the themes of truth, sacrifice, and love? What other themes did you discover as you read the novel?

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