



Stephanie Alexander

Real Women's Stories, Magically Told

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CHARLESTON GREEN

Discussion Guide

Hello! Thanks for reading *Charleston Green*! Please feel free to use the following questions to guide your book club's discussion. While there are no spoilers per say, I'd wait to read the book before reading the questions! ☺ - Stephanie

1. At the beginning of *Charleston Green*, Topsy describes the emotional place she's in, and Jane and Henry's existence haunting the house, as a "no man's land between one life and another." What does she mean? Have you ever felt the same way in your own life?
2. What does it mean to be "haunted?" Discuss what's haunting the main characters.
3. Throughout the book, we see flashbacks to Topsy's childhood and early adulthood. How did these early experiences shape her behavior as an adult woman? How did the main players in her family (Granna, her father, and her mother) influence her?
4. Even though Topsy chose to leave her marriage, she still feels terrible guilt and sadness over her divorce. Is her anguish "justified," when she technically brought it upon herself?
5. Jane struggles with guilt when she cheats on Henry, even though it could be said that he drove her to it. Do you think she was justified in stepping outside of her marriage? Was Henry justified in his anger toward her?
6. All of the ghosts in *Charleston Green* have "matters weighing on their souls." Discuss each of their reactions when they came to realize they can move on. How do their differing reactions reflect their personalities and the circumstances surrounding their deaths?
7. If you were in Proctor's shoes, would you risk moving on and facing judgment?
8. Do you think Mimi is obligated to tell Jimmy about her affair, or if it's truly over and she learned a lesson, should she keep it to herself and work on her marriage?
9. Was Jane justified in her hiding of important information from Henry all those years?

10. Discuss Henry's character – do you see him as more of a “good guy” or a “bad guy?”
11. The color Charleston green is used as a metaphor throughout the story. What does it symbolize?
12. What other metaphors did you pick up on in the book?
13. Compare Jane and Henry's relationship to Ayers and Topsy. What are the similarities and the differences?
14. How do you feel about Topsy's relationship with Will? Is it a positive, or a negative? So far, do you think he's “the guy for her?”
15. Have you ever gotten yourself into a “Shelby” kind of situation, where you keep repeating the same destructive relationship patterns? How did you break the pattern?
16. How do you think May Penny feels about Topsy by the end of the book?
17. Have you ever experienced the kind of feelings Topsy describes as “painter's block,” i.e., the inability to do something you love doing, or feeling emotionally stifled by the circumstances around you? Or are you more of a “pour your pain into your work” kind of person?
18. Most of the characters in *Charleston Green* have learned lessons by the end of the book. Whose evolution felt most poignant and/or relatable to you?
19. Who did you think killed Jane and Henry? Looking back, did you see the clues as to the eventual revelation of what happened to them in 1923?
20. Do you think Topsy and Henry's “talent” is more of a gift or a curse? Would you like to be able to see ghosts? Have you ever had a paranormal experience?

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