

**First Thursday Book Group Discussion Questions**

# **Wings of the Dove**

by Henry James

July 11, 2019, 2pm. Sharon Heydet hosts. Iona Clark leads the discussion

1. Does the novel have an interesting title? What does it mean? If it is enigmatic, when do you realize its significance?
2. Does the novel have an epigraph? These are the quotations or mottoes, often taken from other literary works, that you sometimes find at the beginning of a book. If there is an epigraph, how does it relate to the book? Does it help you understand the author's message?
3. How does the novel open? Is it an effective opening? If it engages your interest - if it grabs you instantly - how does it do that? Are any mysteries presented? How clear is it what is going on? Do you need more information than you are given?
4. What is interesting about the way the story is told? How are the episodes of the novel arranged and linked? Do cause and effect have a part in the story? How does one action or decision lead to another? In your discussion, you might want to identify where the turning points in the action are - where those moments are after which everything is different. Did you anticipate them?
5. From whose point of view is the story told? What is the effect of this? What is their personal perspective? Can we trust their viewpoint? If the viewpoint shifts from one person to another, how smoothly does this happen? Is it clear whose view we are getting? What is the effect of having more than one viewpoint? If the story is told through letters and diaries, or if dreams are used to make revelations, how successful is this?
6. Writers do not always tell their stories in a straightforward way. If flashbacks are used or if the story takes place in different time periods, is it easy to follow what is going on? How smoothly does the writer shift between the two time periods? Why tell a story in this way? If it contains foreshadowing or hints of the future, what is their effect?
7. What is the novel's theme? What central message or idea links all the other components of the novel together? Is the writer concerned with social issues, or environmental issues, for instance? If the novel has more than one theme, which is the main one? Do the different themes complement one another or are they quite separate? Have these ideas been explored in novels before? If they are not original themes, what is interesting about the way this author explores them? Is the theme universal - in other words, does the novel explore a message that is true of all people, in all places, at all times? If the novel is an old one, is its theme still relevant today?