



SILHOUETTE OF A SPARROW
by Molly Beth Griffin

Discussion Guide

One of Garnet's hobbies is cutting silhouettes of various birds out of paper. How do these birds symbolize different characters? Are the similarities more than physical?

In the scene where Garnet teaches Isabella to cut bird silhouettes, she says, "You have to look for the borders between things and trace those dividing lines without thinking that you know what [something] is" (p. 78). How does this quote tie in with the book's major themes? How does it relate to Garnet's aspirations and, ultimately, the decisions she makes?

Silhouette of a Sparrow takes place in 1926, the high point of the Jazz Age and a time of shorter hemlines and haircuts. How does the time period create a certain climate for the book? How does it reflect the book's themes?

In the 1920s, women faced pressure from society to settle down, marry a "breadwinner," and start a family. What important choices does Garnet make that were unconventional for women at the time? Do you think young women today must overcome similar struggles?

Later in the novel, Isabella reveals that her real name is Mary Elizabeth. How is Isabella different from Mary Elizabeth? What is the root of Garnet's fascination with this other side of Isabella?

At the core of the novel is the idea that people can change you. Over the summer, how does Isabella's rebellious nature mold Garnet into a very different person? Is there a person in your own life who changed you in unexpected ways?

Silhouette of a Sparrow emphasizes "how many kinds of love there are in the world" (p. 80). Has this story broadened the definition of love for you? Do you think love—romantic or otherwise—transcends gender, tradition, race, social status, etc.?

In a letter from her mother, Garnet learns that her parents have separated and her father has left the family. How devastating do you think this loss is for Garnet? Does it color her actions for the rest of the book?

A little over halfway through the novel, Hannah admits that her family has lost their fortune. How does this revelation and Hannah's desire to keep it secret affect her family dynamic?

While on Wawatasso Island with Miss Maple, Garnet speculates: "The more I learned, the more I could do to change people's minds, to open their hearts, to be an active force in the world and in my own life, too" (p. 142). Do you agree with Garnet? After reading her story, do you find yourself reevaluating your own aspirations? How can you be a more "active force in the world"?