



A READING GROUP GUIDE FOR

Fellowship Point

by Alice Elliott Dark

INTRODUCTION

After a cancer recurrence, children's book author Agnes Lee decides to secure her legacy by completing the final volume in her Franklin Square book series—a string of literary novels published under a pseudonym. Meanwhile, and just as time consuming, is her plan to protect a majestic stretch of land along the Maine peninsula known as Fellowship Point. To do this, Agnes must convince shareholders to dissolve a generations-old land trust. And one of these shareholders happens to be Agnes's best friend, Polly.

Unlike Agnes—who is childless, irascible, and independent—Polly Wister is a well-off, married woman who is devoted to her husband and three sons. She often defers to the wishes of her family, and her loyalties are torn when she is forced to decide who to support. Is it Agnes, her lifelong best friend? Or is it her family? What is it, really, that Polly wants herself?

Their relationship is further complicated by the appearance of Maud, a young and enterprising book editor who wants Agnes to complete a memoir. Agnes resists, but her long-buried memories and secrets begin to resurface, with far-reaching consequences for all. Deep and emphatic in its portrayal of women's lives, *Fellowship Point* is a masterwork that reckons with history, posterity, class, and, ultimately, the friendships that sustain us.

TOPICS & QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Evaluate the themes of gender, feminism, and domesticity in *Fellowship Point*. How do characters, like Agnes, subvert expectations of womanhood? How does Polly, and how does Maud?
2. Early in the novel, Agnes describes the project of fiction as seeking “to reveal what a particular person [is] bound to do under explicit circumstances” (6). Do you agree with her? If not, how does your idea of fiction’s project differ?
3. Do you think Agnes’s idea evolves or changes over the course of the book? Alternatively, what would you imagine to be Polly’s idea of fiction? Maud’s?
4. The act of writing appears throughout the novel, often in different iterations. As readers, we encounter book synopses, letters, academic papers, and more. Discuss the significance of this, taking into consideration the secrets characters are willing to reveal on the page, but not to each other.
5. Class is another theme in *Fellowship Point*. Track where it shows up, and how, and explore its relationship to gender. For example, is it significant that many of the landowners in this novel are women?
6. Art, literature, and the creation of both appear to be recurring motifs in the novel. Characters write, read, comment on art, struggle to produce it, etc. What do you think the author is saying about artistry in this novel—especially as it pertains to work and womanhood?
7. Discuss the two epigraphs that open the book. How do they inform your interpretation of the novel’s different themes?
8. How would you characterize Agnes’s friendship with Polly? How do you think that friendship evolves throughout the novel—especially with the introduction of Maud—and what do you think the book is saying about how well people know each other?
9. *Fellowship Point* opens with a map of Cape Deel—one that foregrounds many of the novel’s important settings. As a reader, did you notice any location that isn’t represented on this map? Conversely, are there locations that are represented on the map, but which then play smaller roles within the narrative?
10. Discuss the shifting viewpoints in *Fellowship Point*. How does the arrangement of them, as well as the fact that we travel across time (from 2000 to the 1870s) and space (from Philadelphia to Manhattan), affect our experience of the story?
11. Evaluate the themes of conservation and environmentalism in the story. How does it intersect with the novel’s other themes, like that of gender? Class? How might you characterize the people seeking to preserve *Fellowship Point*, and the ones seeking to redevelop it?

ENHANCE YOUR BOOK CLUB

1. Imagine if *Fellowship Point* were narrated by a single character. What would the story look like if it were filtered through Polly's point of view? Agnes's or Maud's? How would the book change—in plot and sensibility—if it were told through the perspective of one of the male characters?
2. Write a story about an important place in your life from your own point of view. Then write it from a friend or family member's perspective. Does your idea of that important place change? Why, how, or why not?
3. Draw a map that foregrounds the important locations in your neighborhood and life, taking into consideration the places you might have to omit. Compare it with a map one of your book club members drew. How do they differ? What settings, if any, recur?