

Remarkable Creatures ~ Tracy Chevalier

Page Turners Meeting - July 12, 2016 @ 6:30

Discussion Questions:

1. The first sentence of the novel is, "Lightning has struck me all my life." What did you expect after reading that? What does Mary mean?
2. What attracts Mary to fossil hunting? How is it different from Elizabeth's motivation?
3. How would you characterize the relationship between Mary and Elizabeth?
4. On page 39 Elizabeth says, "After little more than a year in Lyme I'd come to appreciate the freedom a spinster with no male relatives about could have there." Why is that? What did "freedom" mean for a woman of the time? Who had more freedom—Elizabeth or Mary?
5. What role does religion play in Elizabeth's life? In Mary's?
6. How does the notion of "God's intention" affect their fossil-hunting?
7. Why do you think that in the novel, the women are fossil hunters, while the men are fossil collectors? What point is Chevalier trying to make?
8. At different points in the novel, both Mary and Elizabeth have reason to think that they, themselves, might become fossils. What did each woman mean by that?
9. How does Colonel Birch come between the two women? What are his motives? In the end, do you consider him a decent man?
10. After Birch's auction, on page 203, Elizabeth cries, "Not for Mary, but for myself." Why?
11. Which woman needs the other more? Why?
12. Why does Elizabeth go to London? What does she hope to achieve?
13. Regarding her time on the Unity, Elizabeth says, "I did not expect it, but I had never been so happy" (250). Why does she feel that way?
14. After Mary agrees to sell a specimen to Cuvier, Mam accuses her of becoming a collector, no longer a hunter. What does she mean by that? Is she right?
15. Upon Elizabeth's return from London, Mary says she "was like a fossil that's been cleaned and set so everyone can see what it is" (298). What happened to change her?
16. What was your response to the ending?
17. Have you read any of Tracy Chevalier's other novels? What similarities and differences do you see?

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