

Finding Dorothy ~ Elizabeth Letts

Page Turners Meeting – August 13, 2019 @ 6:00

Discussion Questions:

1. Almost everyone remembers watching the iconic 1939 film, *The Wizard of Oz*. Did you see it in a theater or on television? Did you watch it every year? What characters and scenes have remained with you? What frightened you the most? Did reading *Finding Dorothy* make you want to watch the film again?
2. Have you read *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*? Before reading *Finding Dorothy*, how much did you know about the author's life? Do you think it's surprising that the story is so much better known than its author?
3. In the novel, we are introduced to Maud Gage Baum as an elderly widow, struggling to preserve her husband's legacy. Do you think it was harder for Maud, as an older woman, to make her voice heard? Do you think women of a certain age are sometimes over-looked or marginalized? Do you think it has improved for women or stayed about the same as it was in Maud's day?
4. Maud's forward-thinking mother, Matilda Joslyn Gage, was considered radical by society and even by her opinionated peers. Do you think it helped or hurt Maud to have such a famous and strong-minded woman as her mother? Were you surprised that Maud left college after her mother fought so hard to get her admitted?
5. In *Finding Dorothy*, Elizabeth Letts reveals the origins of some of L. Frank Baum's ideas for *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. Which was your favorite? What surprised you the most?
6. Judy Garland suffered abuse at the hands of the studio executives at MGM and struggled throughout her life with addiction until her early death at age forty-seven. Was there anything else Maud could have done to help Judy? Considering the #MeToo movement, has the situation improved for young actors?
7. Maud's sister Julia refused to give up her daughter Magdalena, even though Frank and Maud were offering the girl a better life. How do you feel about that? Which is more important, the welfare of the mother or the child?
8. Frank and Maud were a prime example of the adage "opposites attract." Frank was a dreamer who always believed in a better future; Maud was pragmatic and sensible, a master at keeping the family running. If Frank and Maud were a couple in the twenty-first century, how do you think their relationship might be different?

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