



## Twilight

By Katherine Mosby  
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### Introduction

In *Twilight*, "Mosby has painted an achingly beautiful portrait of a woman hovering desperately on the edge of self-realization. Raised by an indifferent mother and an unyielding father, New York debutante Lavinia Gibbs is not quite beautiful enough and far too clever to dazzle the rarified social circle in which she travels -- nor does she want to settle into a mind-numbing marital routine in order to escape the stigma of spinsterhood.

When a thirty-something Lavinia has the temerity to break off her better-late-than-never engagement to a suitably stuffy member of the upper crust, she willingly shoulders the ill will of her parents and siblings, fleeing to pre -- World War II Paris with a small monthly allowance and a large dollop of hope. Diminished by both her family and society, she takes her first shaky steps toward freedom and fulfillment by embarking upon a steamy affair with a married Frenchman.

However, when the Germans march into Paris, she discovers that passion and love exact a heavy price that must be paid in full. With a surprise ending reminiscent of Edith Wharton's *Ethan Frome*, this poignant character study traces the precarious evolution of a heart and a mind."

-- *Booklist* Starred Review

### Questions for Discussion

1. Where does the book's title come from? Do you think there is more than one meaning?
2. Discuss the character of Mavis. How important was it for Lavinia to have a role model? Would she have mustered up the courage to leave Shelby and go abroad if she had not met Mavis?
3. Discuss the contrast here between the high life Lavinia left behind and the bleak situation in 1937 Paris with high unemployment, shortages of products, and fear of encroaching fascism to her former life in America. How does the difficulty of her life in Paris contribute to her growth as a person and as a woman? How does it stultify her?
4. How is Gaston Lesseur's character revealed during the war? How is Lavinia's character revealed?
5. Discuss the role that Jean-Marc plays for the lovers. How does it change over the course of the war? What does his death mean for Lavinia?
6. How is the story in *Twilight*, Lavinia's search for a passionate life regardless of the social sacrifices, modern? How is it timeless?
7. What does Gaston's confession, so late in terms of the occupation of Paris and Hitler's domination of Europe, say to Lavinia about his character? How does the secret alter her feelings about their intimacy?
8. The final paragraph of the book very poetically sums up Lavinia's feeling about her life and the choices she has made:

*It made Lavinia feel both beautiful and bereft. It made her realize the fullness of her humanity, and the price of love; that even if she had been raised by wolves, she was not one of them. In the end that was enough to be true to, alone on the darkling plain.*

What has Lavinia learned about love in her life? What has she learned about herself by going back to Gaston's country house to take care of his wife?

9. How is Lavinia a woman ahead of her time? What would the modern-day equivalent be of Lavinia's actions (leaving a safe marriage, her family, and her country) taken to experience the fullness of her humanity?
10. Much of the emotional development of the lovers is revealed through their letters. In what ways does this enhance the intimacy with which get to know them? Are either of them people you would like to know? Why or why not?
11. How does Lavinia's attitude about adultery evolve over the course of the novel?
12. What are the different forms of heroism the novel explores? Which do you think is the most admirable?

### About the Author

*Twilight* is Katherine Mosby's third novel. Previous works include a collection of poetry, *The Book of Uncommon Prayer*, and two novels. Her first novel, *Private Altars*, won the Book-of-the-Month Club's Award for fiction and was a Barnes and Noble Discover Great New Writers Award finalist. Her second novel, *The Season of Lillian Dawes*, was selected by the *New York Times* as a 2002 Notable Book of the Year and was a Booksense Selection. She lives in New York and teaches at NYU's Stern Business School.