

America's First Daughter

William Morrow Paperbacks

By Stephanie Dray & Laura Kamoie

ISBN: 9780062347268

Introduction

In a compelling, richly researched novel that draws from thousands of letters and original sources, bestselling authors Stephanie Dray and Laura Kamoie tell the fascinating, untold story of Thomas Jefferson's eldest daughter, Martha "Patsy" Jefferson Randolph—a woman who kept the secrets of our most enigmatic founding father and shaped an American legacy..



Questions for Discussion

1. If Thomas Jefferson's wife hadn't died, how might he and his daughter have lived different lives? Historically, Jefferson is said to have made a deathbed promise to his wife, and in the novel his daughter makes one as well. How might their lives have differed if they hadn't made those deathbed promises?
2. As portrayed in the novel and in their letters to each other, how would you describe Jefferson and Patsy's relationship with each other? Was Jefferson a good father? Did he change as a father over the course of the novel? Was Patsy a good daughter?
3. Does seeing Jefferson through his daughter's eyes make him more relatable as a Founding Father? How so or why not?
4. The limited choices women had available to them in the Revolutionary era is one theme explored in this book. What were the most important choices Patsy made throughout her life? Do you agree with why she made them? Could or should she have chosen differently?
5. What did you think of Sally's choice to return to Virginia with Jefferson? Why did she make that decision? What were her alternatives and how viable were they?
6. Another theme explored in this book is sacrifice. What does Patsy sacrifice in her effort to protect her father? What did Jefferson sacrifice? What did Sally sacrifice? What did William Short sacrifice?
7. Why does Patsy think her father needs to be protected? Why does she think she is the only one to do it? In what ways does she protect him? What do you think of Patsy's effort to protect Jefferson? Would you have done the same thing?

8. How are Patsy's views on slavery portrayed in this novel? What factors influence her thinking? How do her views differ from her father's or from William Short's?
9. Why did Patsy decide to marry Thomas Mann Randolph Jr.? How would you describe their relationship and how did their relationship change over time?
10. Why can't or won't Patsy cry? Why does she finally cry in the final scene at Monticello?
11. Do you agree with William that Monticello was "a set of chains"? Why not or how so? Were you on William's or Patsy's side during their fight in the final scene at Monticello?
12. In what ways did Patsy shape her father's legacy? In what ways did she shape our own? In what ways is she America's First Daughter