

## The Fifth Avenue Artists Society

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### Introduction

The Bronx, 1891. Virginia Loftin, the boldest of four artistic sisters in a family living in genteel poverty, knows what she wants most: to become a celebrated novelist despite her gender, and to marry Charlie, the boy next door and her first love.

When Charlie proposes instead to a woman from a wealthy family, Ginny is devastated; shutting out her family, she holes up and turns their story into fiction, obsessively rewriting a better ending. Though she works with newfound intensity, literary success eludes her—until she attends a salon hosted in her brother's writer friend John Hopper's Fifth Avenue mansion. Among painters, musicians, actors, and writers, Ginny returns to herself, even blooming under the handsome, enigmatic John's increasingly romantic attentions.

Just as she and her siblings have become swept up in the society, though, Charlie throws himself back into her path, and Ginny learns that the salon's bright lights may be obscuring some dark shadows. Torn between two worlds that aren't quite as she'd imagined them, Ginny will realize how high the stakes are for her family, her writing, and her chance at love.



### Questions for Discussion

- 1. What did you enjoy about *The Fifth Avenue Artists Society*? Which character did you most associate with?*
- 2. The Loftins often speak of their family history, recounting stories of their ancestors. What is the most interesting story of your family?*
- 3. All of the women in the novel are strong in their own way. Who is your female role model? Why? What is it about that person that makes them strong?*
- 4. Discuss the triumphs and tragedies of Ginny's life. How did they shape her? What do you feel for her?*

5. *The relationships between Ginny and Charlie and Ginny and John are both complex. What are the strengths of each relationship and the pitfalls? Can you think of real-life examples of relationships like these?*
6. *Art is a major force for nearly every character in the novel. Discuss each of the siblings. Why is their particular art so important to them?*
7. *When Ginny first encounters the artists society, she is shocked that men and women are sharing their ideas and art. Can you think of some changes that allowed this sharing to become more acceptable in our country today?*
8. *Discuss the goals of each sibling. How did these goals drive them?*
9. *John and Franklin are both active participants in the Optimism Solution scandal. How did their involvement change your perception of them?*
10. *Societal norms of the Gilded Age were much different than they are today. If you could restore some of them to today's world, would you? If so, which ones? In the same manner, which of them are you glad to see extinct?*
11. *What is the role of the artists society in the novel? How does it shape each character?*
12. *What will you take away from The Fifth Avenue Artists Society? Will any aspects remain with you?*