



# Colorado Book Club Resource

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR THE PERFUME COLLECTOR BY KATHLEEN TESSARO

1. The book is described as a secret history told in scent. The three perfumes Andre Valmont creates for Eva mark significant turning points in her life and changes in her identity. Do you have a secret history in perfume? What three perfumes best describe different turning points in your life? Discuss the significance that perfume plays in your own life to alter mood or trigger a memory.
2. Each of the main characters is not quite what they seem to be upon first meeting. How do they appear originally, and how do they change? What do you consider to be the significance of this in the story and how does it alter your opinion of them?
3. Should perfume always be pleasing?
4. Grace's story is based on a real woman's story. She was born into a wealthy, aristocratic family and only discovered she was actually the child of another man in adulthood, when he left his Paris apartment to her in his will. This woman was never able to reconcile her true history. In the novel, Grace's discovery profoundly alters who she is and, more importantly, who she might become. Discuss how she's affected, how it changes her view of herself and what possibilities are open to her now that weren't before.
5. Do you think Eva is a good mother? Point to examples as to why or why not.
6. In the novel, it's not clear if Grace's husband has been unfaithful or not. Why do you believe this is kept ambiguous?
7. Imagine you discovered that your parents were not biologically related to you. What part of your identity would change as a result? What personal backstory about who you are and who you ought to be would you feel free to let go of? Would it alter your values or place in the world? Or would it not make any difference to you?
8. Again and again, the phrase "le droit de choisir" or the right to choose is echoed through the book. It forms the principal legacy that Grace inherits. Why is choice so important to Eva d'Orsay? How does she pass on that legacy?

*Questions from author's website.*



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