

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

IN POLYGAMY'S SHADOW

1. What was your favourite aspect of *In Polygamy's Shadow*? What specific passages in the book struck you? How did they make you feel?
2. Do you know any Mormons? How closely does what you know of their beliefs and practices align with Maggie's experiences in her family and with the church? How much does it differ?
3. Many religions believe in "spare the rod and spoil the child." Do you believe Maggie's father's violence goes beyond reasonable?
4. At her father's funeral, Maggie realizes that his violence toward their family must stem from how he was treated as a child. She reflects that her brother is carrying on the pattern in his own family and that the patriarchal structure of the church reinforces this. Do you agree? If so, do you feel any sympathy for her father?
5. At four years old, Maggie is left in the truck in a snowstorm by her father. Her instinct to live wins over her fear of her father's anger. How do you think this experience impacts Maggie?
6. How do you feel about how Maggie's mother treated her? Do you see her mother as being a victim herself? Of her husband or of the church? Of both? Did you have any sympathy for her mother?
7. Why do you think Janice holds a special place in her parents affection? What do you think of Janice's treatment of Maggie?
8. Maggie describes her siblings Rob and Sarah as surrogate parents to her, when they were only children themselves. How do you think this impacted them?
9. Why do you think Maggie resisted her parents attempts to break her spirit to the Mormon gospel? What characteristics in Maggie insulated her against these attempts?
10. Maggie's main message is that the Mormon church required her parents to place the church before the needs of their family. How does she show this?
11. In the closing scenes of her memoir, did you think that Maggie had forgiven her mother but not the Mormon church?