

PERIL AT THE EXPOSITION

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What did you like most about this novel?
2. In a novel, a single protagonist has “plot armor”—that is, it’s understood they will survive to the novel’s end. However, that’s not the case when you have two protagonists. Are there any advantages or challenges to reading about two sleuths, instead of one?
3. Do you find the Gilded age a period rife with conflict? What surprised you about this era?
4. How are the themes of race, gender and social class woven throughout the book? Which strikes you as the dominant theme?
5. Today anarchy is synonymous with chaos. What surprised you about the history of anarchism and the labor movement in America?
6. In what ways does the relationship between Captain Jim and his bride Diana change through this book?
7. How does Diana change over the course of her adventure?
8. What did you feel were some of the most surprising twists in this book?
9. Which character surprised you the most? What secret did they keep—and why?
10. Why did Abigail spy on Diana?
11. Diana’s adventure on the Ferris Wheel and being called “Indian princess” were based on real events. What surprised you when you read the author’s notes?
12. Dr. Daniel Williams—a Black doctor—was the first surgeon to repair the heart. Had you heard of him before? If not, why do you think that is?
13. Captain Jim learns of the connection between the Haymarket eight (anarchist/labor leaders) and the Confederate army. How does this help explain today’s geographical political affiliations? Midwest folk call it ‘Land of Lincoln’ -how does this explain its deep Republican affiliation?
14. Diana faces some impossible challenges in the course of the novel. Do they change her sense of self, and connection to her heritage?

