

That Summer

Reading Group Discussion Guide

1. Do you think Imogene made reasonable choices? What would you have done in her place?
2. Julia reminds herself that a professor once told her that: "The past is a foreign country". Was that statement true or false in the context of this book?
3. How did Julia's mother's story relate to the story of Imogen?
4. How does the life of a modern woman contrast with that of the Victorian woman?
5. Which story line did you find more interesting: Imogen's or Julia's? Which woman did you relate to more?
6. Which hero did you find more compelling: Gavin or Nick?
7. Who do you think was responsible for what happened to Imogen and Gavin?
8. Did the outcome of Imogen and Gavin's story come as a surprise to you? What did you think was going to happen?
9. Arthurian legendry, including the story of Tristan and Iseult, plays a large role for both the Pre-Raphaelite painters and for Imogen and Gavin. Why are these stories so important to them? How does their relationship to an idealized Middle Ages shape the historical characters in this book?
10. Did you find yourself feeling sympathy for Jane Cooper, or merely irritation? Likewise, how do you feel about Julia's cousin Natalie?
11. Did you know anything about the Pre-Raphaelites before reading this book? Did anything you learned about them here surprise you?
12. Both Imogen and Julia's mother make impulsive romantic choices in their youth that shape their lives. Did you have early relationships you're grateful to be out of? If you were in a world, like Imogen, where divorce wasn't an option, what would you do?
13. If you were Julia, would you trust Nick?
14. Does *That Summer* remind you of A.S. Byatt's *Possession*? If so, why?
15. Julia's journey into her family's past is launched by the discovery of a hidden painting. Have you ever discovered an item that has made you wonder about your family? Are there secrets in your family's past?