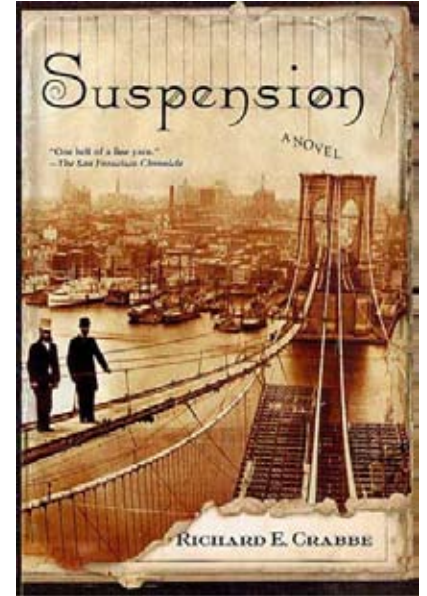




Reading Group Gold

Suspension

by Richard E. Crabbe



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Introduction to *Suspension*

May 31, 1883, 3:55 p.m. Twenty thousand men, women, and children, their faces shining in the late afternoon sun, are strolling the Eighth Wonder of the World. The Brooklyn Bridge is open just a week, its promenade a magnet for the teeming masses of New York and Brooklyn. An engineering marvel of transcending beauty, the bridge is simply breathtaking.

In precisely five minutes, it will fall.

Seven desperate men, former Confederate soldiers turned saboteurs, have labored for years to destroy the bridge, which they saw as a symbol of hated Yankee supremacy.

Sergeant Detective Tom Braddock is one step behind the conspirators. Working through a series of murderous dead-ends, Braddock has dogged the seven men from the cables of the bridge to the shadowy alleys of the Lower East Side and the back streets of Richmond, Virginia. Slowly, he has slowly drawn closer to the unthinkable truth, a truth that none can accept...

Reading Group Guide Questions

1. The Brooklyn Bridge occupies a central role in *Suspension*. As the most ambitious and monumental construction project of its day, it has an impact on every character in the book. Each is touched in different ways and sees different things when they look at the awesome, soaring span sweeping across the East River. How are the characters affected? How does each perceive it, and how are those perceptions colored by personal experience or motive?
2. Tom Braddock is an unusual man in many ways. His perceptions of tenement life, his relations with the Chinese on the Lower East Side, and his relationship with Mary are all contrary to the norms of the late nineteenth century. What does this say about Tom's character? Is he rejecting the norms for his own purposes or does he just follow his instincts? What does this illustrate about his value systems and how do those beliefs differ from the norms of the day?



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3. The Civil War was the defining event of nineteenth century America. It deeply wounded the generation that fought it and forever altered the generations that came after. Very much like the Brooklyn Bridge, the war speaks to many of the characters in *Suspension*, particularly Tom and Thaddeus. In what ways have their experiences in the war influenced their lives? How have they been altered and in what ways are their motivations influenced by their war years?
4. Two of the conspirators, Lincoln and Sullivan, are ultimately affected by their work on the bridge in ways they do not anticipate. How do their perceptions change? Why do they change at all? What conflicts do those changes pose for Lincoln and Sullivan and how are they resolved?
5. Jumbo the elephant plays a critical role in *Suspension*. He is one of the keys to bringing Mike Bucklin and Tom Braddock closer together and ultimately solving the puzzle of the conspiracy. In a deeper sense, Jumbo is also a metaphorical character. How does Jumbo fulfill this role?
6. Emily Roebling was a remarkable woman. Her strength of character, her determination, and her drive to see the Brooklyn Bridge completed under her husband's direction are well documented. In what ways was she unusual for her time? How was she like Tom Braddock? What attributes do they share and how do those attributes affect their attraction to each other?

About the Author

Richard E. Crabbe has a 20-year career in advertising sales with *Advance Publications*, *The New York Post*, *Times Mirror*, and currently Time Warner. *Suspension* was penned substantially on the Staten Island ferry, commuting to Manhattan. He is a lifelong resident of Staten Island, where his wife Kim and three daughters, Chelsea, Amanda, and Rebecca have him happily outnumbered.