

READING GROUP GUIDE

Four Wives

By Wendy Walker

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About this Guide

The following author biography and list of questions about *Four Wives* are intended as resources to aid individual readers and book groups who would like to learn more about the author and this book. We hope that this guide will provide you a starting place for discussion, and suggest a variety of perspectives from which you might approach *Four Wives*.

About the Book

Take a peek beyond the perfectly-manicured lawns of Hunting Ridge. For four wives who live there, all is not as it seems...

Former child prodigy Love Welsh can't seem to banish the demons that ended her career. Now a devoted mother and wife, her quest for a resolution to her secret past will place at risk the life she has created. Her neighbor, part-time divorce attorney Marie Passeti, struggles with a difficult case and her unexpected feelings for the young intern working at her side. In a mansion across town, Gayle Beck enjoys the social status that her family's "old money" guarantees, but inside her fairy tale, life grows darker with each passing day. Gayle's friend, Janie Kirk, who is both envied and loathed for her exceptional beauty and expert homemaking, is losing the battle to remain satisfied in a passionless marriage, and falls into a surprising affair.

As the women plan a charity gala, their not-so-perfect lives are slowly exposed. And as springtime comes to a close, each woman faces the most difficult challenge of all: reconciling her innermost desires with the path that she has chosen.



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About the Author

Wendy Walker is a former commercial litigator and investment banker who now works at home writing and raising her children. She is the author of *Social Lives* and the editor of *Chicken Soup for the Soul: Power Moms*.

Discussion Questions

1. Though all four wives face different personal struggles, there are some overarching issues that all of them must face throughout. What are they? If you had to pick one theme that runs through the stories of all four characters, what would it be?
2. What problems facing Love, Marie, Gayle and Janie seem specific to suburban life? Does the story seem to be critical of suburban life, in general, or this kind of upscale suburb, in particular? Have you read other novels that explored suburban life through this kind of lens? How did *FOUR WIVES* differ from other novels of suburban life that you've read?
3. It could be argued that the women in this book are archetypes of modern "wife-hood." Do you agree? Did you see the women as symbols or did they feel "real" to you? Which character felt the most "real" and why?
4. The author devotes a lot of attention to exploring how childhood experiences dramatically shape one's choices later in life. Through which characters is this theme most thoroughly explored? Did the revelation of childhood secrets change your impression of any of the characters?
5. The cause of Love's illness is never discovered. What do you think the author was trying to accomplish by leaving this mystery unsolved? What do you think, if anything, Love's unresolved illness symbolizes?
6. Professional identity is another important theme in the novel. Why does Marie cling to her identity as a lawyer so vehemently? What does her devotion to her career represent or say about her? What did Marie learn from the Farrell case? How do you think her involvement in the case plays into the decisions she makes at the end of the book?
7. Whether the wives simply ponder its possibilities, engage in it, or are "wronged" by it, infidelity is an issue that most of the women in the novel grapple with. What does this novel have to say about the reasons someone might become unfaithful to his or her spouse? In instances where affairs occur or nearly occur, what attracts each person to the other? Did you react differently to the infidelity of one character than you did to another?



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8. For several, if not all, of the marriages in the novel, one might find it easy to question why they've stayed together as long as they have. What does the novel suggest about the reasons people remain in bad or unsatisfying marriages? Do you understand why some of the relationships have continued for as long as they have? Are there any you have trouble justifying?

9. What roles do supporting characters like Randy and Paul play in helping Marie and Gayle make the choices they do? What do these men provide these women that their husbands do not?

10. Readers tend to view Janie as the "bad" wife. Despite her questionable choices, do you see her as "bad?" What, if anything, could be said in her defense? Do you think her expectations of married life are unrealistic?

11. Were you satisfied with where each woman was left off at the end of the novel? Where do you think these women will be in their lives one year from the end of the book?

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