



3. The image of light refracting (whether through mirrors, chandeliers, or bodies of water) recurs throughout the book. What do you think these images represent? Are they intrinsic to the story? What might the author be intending to communicate through them?

4. Both Dr. McCleary and Dr. Kazanjian enjoy talking about the myriad muscles that exist within the face and about how intricately constructed a body part the face is. There are also quite vivid descriptions of injuries, both suffered and imagined, throughout the book. Did you enjoy the passages relating to medical matters? Did you feel that these passages enhanced or impeded the story?

5. World War I is a rich setting for any novel. Why do you think the author chose to have it take place away from the front lines? Do you think that **The Crimson Portrait** is in fact a book about war?

6. Anna and Catherine are representative of two very different types of women of their era. Do you feel that this is why they have a hard time getting along with each other, or is there something else that prevents them from growing close? Discuss the contrasts between the two women's lives.

7. Do you consider Catherine's actions in her relationship with Julian ultimately selfish, or understandable given her emotional condition?

8. At one point in the novel Catherine says to Dr. McCleary, "Someday my house will be quiet again. Although it will always be haunted by suffering" (page 173). He responds by telling Catherine that she creates "her own ghosts." Which one of them do you agree with?

9. Artis forms strong bonds with many of the doctors in the hospital, though especially with Dr. McCleary. Given their relationship, how do you interpret Dr. McCleary's actions in the wake of Artis's being drafted?

10. The nurses and orderlies stay mostly on the sidelines of the story, although, clearly, like the novel's principal characters, they are not immune to the tragedy and the emotions of the war. Select and discuss passages in which the nurses' or orderlies' experiences are brought to the novel's foreground. What role do these scenes play in the novel?

## Author Bio

Jody Shields is the author of *THE FIG EATER*, *THE CRIMSON PORTRAIT* and *THE WINTER STATION*. Formerly Design Editor of the *New York Times* magazine and a Contributing Editor of *American Vogue*, Shields is also a screenwriter and a collected artist. She is a resident of New York City.

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