

Tideswell

To write a fictional story is to create an imaginary world. The writer spends a long time living with his/her characters. S/he knows what they look like, how they sound, what they think. The same with places and events. Over the months it takes to conceive and write a novel, the writer amasses a huge amount of detail. It would be a bad idea to include all this, even if it were possible. This means that the reader has to be a partner in the creative process because they must set what the writer offers them in a context they must devise for themselves. It means that the finished book is a place where the imaginations of the reader and the writer meet, and merge to bring the fiction to life.

Which is a long-winded way of saying that there are no right answers to the questions/topics that appear below. I know what I meant when I wrote the book, but I'm surprised and delighted when readers feed back to me things they've got from it that I'd never thought of.

I always appreciate and value the chance to interact with readers. Do feel free to email me at phill@phillfeatherstone.net. I always reply.

Suggested Book Group Discussion Topics

(Warning. These suggestions for discussion contain spoilers. It's not recommended that you read them until you've finished the book.)

Gully James

What's your assessment of Gully James? How likely does it seem to you that he didn't know what Holly was going through in Tideswell? Is his warning to Alice genuine, or is it part of the movement against her?

Carol (Alice's Mother)

What do you make of Carol? Think about how she treats Alice's two boys. Are there things that make you think she might be lonely? Does she have a secretive side? Should she have told Alice and Holly about their sister?

Simon

What motivates Simon? On the whole, do you think that he's been a good husband and father? Do you at any point feel sorry for him? At the end, when his affair with Tiffany is over, do you think Alice should take him back? What do you think about his expectations of Alice as a wife? How do their separate financial arrangements fit into this?

The Affair

What do you think about Alice's reaction to her discovery of Simon's affair with Tiffany? What does it tell you about her relationship with Simon and her marriage? Would it have been better for her to try to patch things up?

Amir

Readers' opinions about Amir are divided. Some think he's a dish, some believe he exploits Alice. On the one hand, he's a considerate lover; on the other, he makes no effort to see Alice again after their night together. What do you think of him?

The Dream

In an early draft, Alice finds a book about witches among Holly's things, and reads an account of the trial and execution of the Tideswell witches. Following this, she has a nightmare about it (the dream sequence in the final version). Reading the book was removed from the final draft to create the inference of a supernatural happening - i.e. the dream comes from somewhere outside Alice, and she can't explain it. Which version do you prefer?

The Village

Why do the Tideswell villagers turn so violently against Alice? Could she have done more to establish herself in the village and ward off trouble? Would it have made a difference if she'd known what happened to Holly?

Professor Weston

Alice becomes convinced that the session between Bryan Weston and Simon has been pre-arranged. What do you think? If you agree with Alice, at what point do you become suspicious of Weston?

Genre

Tideswell crosses several genres. If you were looking for it in a bookshop, in which section would you expect to find it? Does it remind you of any other books you've read?