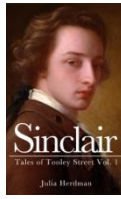


JULIA HERDMAN BOOKS

www.juliaherdman.co.uk



Book Group Corner - Topics & Questions for Discussion in Sinclair

1. At the beginning of the story the first chapter establishes the two male protagonists, then in chapter two, we meet Charlotte the main female character, for the first time. Discuss the similarities and differences between the introductions to the characters. What are your first impressions?
2. The traditional women's role is turned upside down in this story, with the women having the means to make a living usually owned by men. Discuss how this affects the characters and the nature of their predicament.
3. Each of the female characters make decisions that impact significantly on their lives. Look at the decisions they make. How do they affect their businesses and family?
4. Realising you have made the wrong choices is just as important as realising you have the right choices. Look at the men in this story – Sinclair, Greenwood and Robert Leadam, John Leadam, Dr Martin and Mr Hesselbee. Discuss the choices they make and why they make them.
5. How do you feel the relationships between different classes are handled in this novel?
6. The author's depiction of life in the apothecary shop provides a vivid picture of everyday family life and life of medical apprentices in London. What did you find most interesting about medical training at the end of the 18th century?
7. In the story Sinclair's beliefs are tested to the limit. Is he a better man for it?
8. In this book, Charlotte Leadam is a guiding force in Sinclair's moral development unlike in many novels of time such as those by Jane Austin where the leading male character is the guiding force. This is a more modern approach to the heroine's role. Does it work in an 18th century context and do the other female characters have the same moral authority?
9. The author makes several references to financial corruption and the power of big business over individuals and the institutions of the state. How did it make you feel about this period in English history? Does the novel make you think about what's happening in the world of commerce today?
10. What do you think the future holds for the families? How do you imagine their stories playing out?

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