

The Lions of Fifth Avenue by Fiona Davis Discussion Questions

1. Laura Lyons, despite her husband's protests, wants to be a wife, a mother and a dedicated journalism student. Do you think women still face societal pressure today to only fill traditional roles? Do you think it's possible to "have it all"?
2. The NYPL is very important to both Laura and Sadie. Is the library important to you? What role do you think your local library plays in your community?
3. How does Sadie's character challenge stereotypes about librarians? Before reading this book, did you know the different roles they play in serving the public?
4. How did going to the Heterodoxy club change Laura? Do you see similar organizations at work today? What is the importance of having spaces where women can voice their opinions, stories and plans for the future?
5. What do you think of how Laura handles the situation after she finds out the identity of the book thief?
6. Losing the only copy of his manuscript is a devastating blow to Jack. Do you think the act of burning the manuscript was justified? Why or why not? How do you think technology has changed the value we put on the written word?
7. In her note, Laura writes that "it was all ultimately her fault, that her own actions initiated a cascade of tragedies." Why do you think Laura believes she is responsible? Do you agree? Would things have been different if so much responsibility in the home didn't fall only to Laura?
8. At the trial, Sadie argues for a harsher sentence for the book thief because what was stolen was more than a number of pages worth a certain amount, but "pieces of Western history and culture that have a dramatic impact...the loss of these items is a detriment to all of humanity." Do you agree that the thief should receive a longer sentence? Given these items are priceless, do you think that locking them away is a viable solution? If not, why do you think it's important for the public to have access to these items?
9. Why do you think Sadie was so closed off from people? In part, she used her grandmother's life as a justification for her own. What do you think finding out about Laura's real life did for Sadie?
10. Laura struggles with her conflicting commitments to school and the Heterodoxy club. Do you think she did the right thing? Would you have done the same? Why do you think it was important to the women of the Heterodoxy club to keep their discussions private? Why wouldn't they want their ideas disseminated?