

THE MANY REFLECTIONS OF MISS JANE DEMING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

At the beginning of the story, Jane packs three things in a secret carpetbag that she doesn't want her stepmother to know about. What are these three things, and what do they tell us about Jane? What does this act tell us about Jane's relationship with her stepmother?

Jane believes moving to Washington Territory is "going to change everything" (p. 8). Which things does Jane want to change? Based on what you know about the Pacific northwest, what do you think will happen when Jane and her family arrive?

Why does Jane set such store by the pamphlet written by Mr. Mercer? What does this tell us about her hopes and dreams for the future? What does it tell us about how she feels about Mr. Mercer?

What kind of relationship does Jane have with her stepmother, Mrs. D? How do you think Mrs. D feels about Jane? Do you think Mrs. D treats Jane fairly? Do you think Jane and Mrs. D would have gotten along better if Jane's father hadn't died in the war?

Why does Jane want to go to school? What are the meanings she has attached to education? How does Miss Gower convince Mrs. D to allow Jane to work in the lifeboat school? Why do you think she chose to hire Jane at all? Do you think Miss Gower wants Jane to work, or is something else going on here? How is school in Washington Territory different from what Jane is used to? Which feels familiar to you? Which sounds like a better system?

What happens when the ship reaches San Francisco? When the ship reaches Seattle? What did Jane expect Seattle to be like? Of all the ways in which Seattle doesn't live up to Jane's expectations, which do you think is the most discouraging to her?

Consider the moment Jane realizes she's come to Seattle under misleading pretenses. How does this scene unfold, and what about this moment makes it the last straw? How does this change her outlook on Washington Territory as a whole?

Why does Mrs. D marry Mr. W? What does this tell us about women's lives in the 1800s? How does Jane feel about this outcome? What do you think would have happened to Jane and her family if Mrs. D hadn't been able to get married?

What are some fears and concerns Jane has about living on the eastside? Do any of them turn out to be justified? What are some advantages and opportunities the eastside provides? Does the eastside live up (or down) to Jane's expectations?

How would you describe Jane's relationship with Mr. W? What did she expect from a stepfather, and what did she get? Why does she decide to call him Dad?

On p. 201, Jane writes, "There is more than one way for a girl to broaden her mind." What does she mean by this? What is the significance of the fact that Jane has this realization while she's in school? What other skills has Jane developed that she values just as much as she does a formal education?