

## BOOK CLUB QUESTIONS FOR *THE DEPTH OF BEAUTY*

1. At the beginning of *The Depth of Beauty*, Will Firestone has it all, from wealth to physical appeal. He enters unfamiliar territory for pragmatic reasons, but it quickly becomes personal. What do you think is the best way to broaden your outlook (with the goal of removing prejudice or fear) if it isn't something you're forced into doing?
2. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century, Chinese immigrants in San Francisco were discriminated against, vilified, and practically forced to live in their own "ghetto" of Chinatown. In what ways do you see similarities or differences between their plight and that of immigrants in the U.S. today?
3. Will Firestone is both repelled and fascinated by the foreign culture he's introduced to. One aspect of it even leads to a dear friend's suicide. How would you reconcile the tension between keeping an immigrant's cultural heritage intact and succeeding in a country that doesn't share those values and practices? Consider the question from both the host country and the immigrant's point of view.
4. Donaldina Cameron of the Presbyterian Mission House made it her life's work to rescue vulnerable immigrant women and children; she saved many from exploitation, abuse and servitude. Because evangelism is a tenet of the Christian faith, the "price" she had them pay for their deliverance was conversion (or at least allegiance) to Christianity. Was that too high a price for her charges to pay?
5. Donaldina used Mandy's position as "mission historian" to send Mandy and her interpreter Fung Hai out into Chinatown to "scout" for at-risk women and girls under the guise of getting them to tell their story. Do you think this was a fair practice? Why or why not?
6. When the plague struck those close to her, Mandy volunteered to nurse the victims back to health. She was only fifteen. Given the circumstances, do you think her reasoning was sufficient for Dr. Tom Justice to allow her to stay? If not, how would you have handled the situation?
7. Mandy was only seventeen and technically still under the guardianship of Gus and Lia Wolff when she agreed to be a life model and pose in the nude. If you had a daughter the same age who wished to do the same thing, how would you handle her request?
8. Mandy is unusually mature for her age and many would point to her family's misfortune as a reason for it. What elements in Mandy's background do you think contributed to what many would call her "old soul," and do you think such insight is possible with someone who, like Will Firestone, for instance, had a completely charmed upbringing?
9. Anson Cotter is an excellent physician but a poor excuse for a human being in many ways. In today's cultural climate, he would probably be called out for both his bigoted attitudes and his boorish actions. How much should one overlook an individual's personal foibles if they are otherwise providing a worthwhile service for the community?
10. Will Firestone has to leave his home and even his identity, to determine who he is and what is most important to him. Do you think one needs to shake things up to such an extent in order to learn crucial life lessons? If not, how would you advise someone going through an internal crisis like Will to find answers without "running away from home"?