

Suggested Book Discussion Questions for “The Pig Farmer’s Wife”

By LaVonne Misner

1. At a very young age, while still trying to accept the death of her parents, Gert found herself in a difficult financial situation. She couldn’t access monies from an insurance policy without having a *male overseer*. She asked George to marry her for that purpose. Would Gert have made that same decision today?

Background info: Prior to 1974, credit cards were reserved for men. Financial discrimination against women was accepted as the norm. Only married women could get a credit card, and then only if their husbands cosigned on the application. Single women needed a male family member to agree to be legally responsible for their debts.

The Equal Credit Opportunity act, was enacted in 1974, prohibiting discrimination based on sex, marital status, or age in all credit transactions.

2. Gert wanted to use her money to purchase a convenience store, similar to the one her parents owned. But George insisted on using it to purchase a pig farm, and Gert felt powerless to go against her husband’s wishes. How might that have played out differently today?
3. Gert was jealous of Mrs. Peterson’s flirtatious mannerisms with George. Was her jealousy justified?
4. Gert spent the night sleeping outside of the gas station where George had dropped her off. She thought about many things throughout that night and finally developed a plan for herself. Was it a good plan? Did she have other options, and if so, what were her other options, and why didn’t she act on them?
5. Why did Karl allow Gert to stay in the back of the store overnight that first night? And why did he allow her to continue staying there rent free?
6. Discuss the impact Gert had on Martha, as well as the impact Martha had on Gert.
7. There were many characters in this novel. Who were your favorites and why.

* **Gert (Miss Birdie)**, the main character in this novel.

* **Carl**, Martha’s husband, and store owner.

* **Martha**, Carl's wife who became a strong advocate of woman's rights after reading "The Feminine Mystique" and meeting Gert.

* **Jason**, seventeen-year-old son of George and Gert who took over the family farm after the death of his father disappearance of his mother.

* **Dorothy Webber**: a member of the co-op who had two grown daughters and was married to Jerry, an electrician.

* **Nancy Blanchet**: a young bride, married to John, had no children, and was a member of the co-op. She inherited a chair that was in good condition but was covered in a print she didn't like. That chair became the big turning point of the women's upholstery business.

* **Janet Bauer**: previously a home economics teacher at a high school in St. Paul in the Twin Cities. She resigned from her teaching position when her husband accepted a managerial position at the Alexander Lumber yard.

* **Nadine Colbert**: a recent widow who invited Miss Birdie to the Bellowing Moose for Christmas dinner.

* **Betsy McGiffin**: mother of three school age boys plus a toddler named Stewart. She left high school without graduating when she became pregnant. Her husband worked as a mechanic at the Edsel Garage.

* **Sheriff Hicks**, who failed at solving Gert's disappearance and failed at rounding up the pigs

* **Jessica**, the girl next door who Jason married.

* **Mrs. Peterson**, Jessica's mother who lived on the neighboring farm and helped Jason during the funeral and during his adjustment to running the farm on his own.

* **Mr. Slank**, the bank president.

* **Priscilla**, the Pig with status.

8. There were also several different scenes in this novel. What were your favorites and why.
- i. Gert's communing with Wilks, the bear statue?
 - ii. The sheriff rounding up the pigs?
 - iii. The day of the funeral when the girl fell in the pig pen, or the overheard conversations.

- iv. The ‘cruising chicks’ scene?
 - v. The ice-skating scene?
 - vi. The scenes in front of the bank?
 - vii. The job interview in Alabama?
 - viii. Betsy’s rants?
 - ix. Christmas day when Nadine & Miss Birdie spent the day together.
 - x. The day Jason discovers names of classmates on the list in the church foyer?
 - xi. The day Jason and Gert face each other at the store?
9. Why didn’t Gert put a greater effort into contacting her son?
10. Are we more critical of mother’s who abandon their children than we are of father’s who leave their families?
11. Were you surprised at how this novel ended? If so, why?
12. Did you enjoy the quotes at the beginning of each chapter?
13. Did you find the information in the Appendixes interesting and helpful? Were you surprised by some of the information?

Thank you for choosing to read this novel. If you enjoyed it, please consider leaving a one or two sentence review on the Amazon page where you purchased the book.

Thank you,

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