

***She Walks in Beauty* Discussion Questions**

Have you ever wanted to fix one of your physical attributes? Which one? Why?

Do you feel any sense of kinship with the women of the late-Victorian era? Did you recognize yourself in any of the characters?

How would you describe the Victorian mind-set?

Did you discover anything new about this time period? Did anything surprise or shock you?

The general Victorian attitude toward the poor can be summed up in Aunt's words: "Some races are simply inferior to our own. The Irish, for instance. And the Italians. If they're poor and they live in tenements, then it's their own fault. If God wanted the poor to prosper, then they would. If they're not, then they deserve what they get." How has our view of the poor changed? How hasn't it?

The women in the late-Victorian era were put through a training regimen in order to prepare them to take on a role in society. What was that role? What is the role of young women today? In your opinion, what sort of training would be beneficial to the modern woman?

What sort of advice could Lizzie and Clara offer today's women?

Do you think we've retained any attitudes, beliefs, or mores from the Victorians?

Fashions through the ages have often been created on the assumption that people aren't shaped correctly. What apparent flaws does modern fashion try to correct? What is today's ideal standard of beauty?

Society will tell you who you are and how to be until you decide to answer those questions for yourself. What has society been telling you?

Reading Jacob Riis's *How the Other Half Lives* influenced Clara a great deal. Has there been a particular book that has opened your eyes in a similar way, challenging your point of view and your beliefs? How did it affect you, and why?

At one point, Clara and Harry have a conversation about God: "'I must insist that you matter to [God] much more than you seem to realize.' There was an earnestness to [Harry's] words that reverberated inside me. If only he spoke the truth. I would like to believe that God cared for me. That He might love me no

matter what anyone else thought. How nice it would be to live life with Harry's convictions. To be so certain that God thought of us. And so quick to dismiss the thoughts of others." Is it difficult for you to believe that God thinks of you? What kind of thoughts do you think He has?