



"A SHATTERINGLY ORIGINAL
COLLECTION OF SHORT STORIES
FROM AN EXTRAORDINARY WRITER."
CAROLINE LEAVITT, *NEW YORK TIMES*
BEST SELLING AUTHOR OF
PICTURES OF YOU

THE
**APPOINTED
HOUR**
SUSANNE DAVIS



THE APPOINTED HOUR: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The following questions revolve around significant themes and characters, and are meant to guide readers toward a thoughtful discussion of *The Appointed Hour*.

1. Throughout *The Appointed Hour*, we perceive a sense of interconnectedness between each story. Discuss the presence of underlying themes and characters that give us access to the idea of universality or common ground between stories.
2. Think about the relationship between “The Object of Desire” and “Dancing at the Sky Top with Andrea.” Why does Davis choose to subvert chronology by placing the story of Andrea’s marriage to the eventually-abusive Troy *after* the story of her experiences in the support group she joins after separating from Troy?
3. Discuss the concept of *fate* in “Destiny’s Appearance.” Why does Earl think that Jamie is the son of his former lover, Alyson Brand? The realization that Jamie is *not* Alyson’s son drives Earl to a sudden revelation which manifests itself in a loving acknowledgment of his wife Marilyn. How are these two events related, and what does this story tell us about the presence of destiny in our own lives?
4. In “The Law of Gravity,” why does Ricky interfere with the ending of Doug’s bungee jump? Think about various potential motivations for Ricky’s actions, and discuss what might occur directly after the conclusion of the story.
5. Think about themes of *loyalty*, *betrayal*, and *forgiveness* in the context of “John Mason’s Eye.” Discuss the final scene of the story, in which Harold makes a major confession upon John’s return from the hospital. How has this experience changed Harold’s perception of his brother, and how is John able to forgive Harold for hurting him, knowing that he may have done so purposefully?
6. In “The Painted Lady,” why does Willie refuse to give the young woman a second tattoo? Do you agree with his decision to refuse service to this customer? Why or why not?
7. Discuss the ending of the story “Merciful Like the Father” in terms of its religious or spiritual connotations. In what ways are the observers of Mother Agnes’s fall and rescue comparable to a line of people receiving communion, as Davis implies? And why is Mother Agnes’s face described as “the most beautiful face any of us had ever seen?” (168).