



SQUARE CIRCLE PRESS LLC
137 Ketcham Road
Voorheesville, NY 12186
(518) 432-6657
www.squarecirclepress.com
bookinfo@squarecirclepress.com

BOOK CLUB DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

BOOK TITLE: *Cornflower's Ghost: An Historical Mystery*

AUTHOR: Thomas Pullyblank

- The story takes place in January 1997, a month that saw erratic weather in upstate New York. What role does weather play in the story? How does the weather change from the beginning of the story to the climactic scene at Crane's End?
- How would you describe the state of affairs in the History Department at SUNY Clinton Falls? What role do you think the department chair, Professor Roger Whittaker, plays in maintaining order in the department? What is Professor Martha Radisson's role in the department and in the wider university setting?
- How would you describe Tom Flanagan's spiritual life?
- Who was Theodorick Crane? What contributions did he make to the American Revolution? Why was an important figure after the revolution?
- There are three examples of political protest in *Cornflower's Ghost*, one in the early 1800s, one in the 1960s and 70s, and one in 1997. What were these protests against? Who led each of them? What did each leader/participant hope to achieve by protesting?
- How does Congressman Harold Radisson understand history? Was the use to which he puts history in his political statements and actions useful?
- In the novel, Tom Flanagan is often caught in between "town and gown," that is, between the community of Clinton Falls and the state university there. What character(s) best represents each side of the town and gown dichotomy? In what ways does Tom succeed and fail in negotiating between the two?
- Discuss the situation in New York during the years of the American Revolution. What changed from 1779 to 1781?
- What are some of the ways that the past and present are connected in the story?
- What challenges do the graduate students at SUNY Clinton Falls face?
- Who is Benjamin Fries? How is he important to the story? Consider how he relates to the other characters in the story.
- In one scene, Tom and Jens view a videotape of the Patriot Village protest. How has technology changed from 1997 to today?
- How would you describe the relationship between Peter Langley and Martha Radisson? What do we know of their relationship at the beginning of the book? What additional knowledge do we have by the end of the book?
- Congressman Harold Radisson doesn't appear in person until towards the end of the story. How would you describe the presence he has in the lives of Tom and other characters before his appearance? After it?
- Who killed Theodorick Crane? Why?
- How did Peter Langley die? Why?
- Who was Cornflower? Why does she matter to the story?
- Does Tom have any unfinished business at the end of the *Cornflower's Ghost*?
- For fun: Should the subtitle be "*An Historical Mystery*" or "*A Historical Mystery*?"