

Discussion Questions  
*for*  
A New Graft on the Family Tree

These questions are designed to enhance your group's discussion of *A New Graft on the Family Tree* by Isabella Alden.

1. Mr. Morgan insisted that Lewis bring his new bride Louise to live on the farm with the Morgan family. When this book was written in 1890 it was not uncommon for multiple generations to live together in the same home. If you were a new bride, how would you feel about living with your in-laws, especially if you had never met them before?
2. What words would you use to describe Lewis's mother? Do you think Mrs. Morgan was a good mother? Why do you think she behaved coldly toward her family and neighbors? The author stated Mrs. Morgan never kissed, caressed or held six-year-old Neelie. How do you think Mrs. Morgan justified such behavior?
3. John began to change his mind about Louise after she thanked him for a small kindness and he realized that no one had ever said "Thank you" to him before. What does that reveal to you about the way John has been treated by his own family? How much does that explain the source of John's sullen attitude? Do you think it explains why John sought acceptance outside his own home, even if the acceptance came from the wrong kind of people?
4. Louise believed in the power of prayer. She was so confident that her prayers for John's salvation would be answered, she began to doubt her faith after John rebelled and left home. Why do you think she reacted in that way? Do you think Christians often expect God to answer their prayers in a manner that makes sense to us, rather than in a way that makes sense to God? Explain why you think so.
5. Mrs. Morgan took out her anger and frustrations by spanking Neelie because she broke a dish. The author describes the punishment as "degrading" to Neelie; and both Louise and Dorothy lost respect for Mrs. Morgan over the incident. How did you feel as you read the description of Neelie's punishment? Did you think Mrs. Morgan was justified in spanking the child? Do you think she regretted it?
6. Louise suffered several insults from her mother-in-law. Describe the ways Louise dealt with those situations. Do you think she handled the incidents correctly? If you were in Louise's position, how difficult would it have been for you to forgive and forget Mrs. Morgan's rudeness, as Louise did? How easy do you think it would be to employ Louise's tactics in similar situations you encounter in your everyday life?
7. One of the author's themes in this book was that God works in the lives of non-believers just as much as he works in the lives of Christians. Do you agree with the author?

8. Which character did you like the most? What traits or characteristics about that character interested you? Is he or she someone you would like to know in your own life?

9. Which character surprised you the most? How did that character change and grow over the course of the story?

10. What were some of the ways in which the customs and lifestyle of the 1890s were shown in the novel? What historical aspects of the story surprised you the most? What hadn't you known that took place during this time period?

11. What overall message do you think the author wanted to convey with this book? What lesson stood out to you the most?

Add your own questions here:

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---