

# Discussion questions for A Golden Life



- 1) In any organization, secretaries have a great deal of influence and knowledge. What do you think makes Frances such an effective secretary? Why do so many people confide in her?
- 2) This is a story about journeys (both physical and emotional), and nearly every main character has one. Which character's journey did you find most surprising?
- 3) This novel immerses readers in the daily life of the 1930s, with all the fashion, entertainment, daily routines, and social expectations of the era. Which aspects of life in 1938 sound appealing? What would have been difficult about living during that time period?
- 4) Kitty Ridley's long life contains many hidden and surprising stories. Which stories—about her acting career, or about her personal life—did you find most compelling?
- 5) What was your opinion of Belinda Vail? Did your feelings about her change over the course of the story?
- 6) The stay in the Napa Valley “shakes things loose” for Frances and for Lawrence Merrill. What is it about being there that changes them? Have you ever been to a place that got you out of your normal routine and helped you see your life from a new perspective?
- 7) Kitty Ridley talks about how she spent a lifetime performing for other people, making herself into whatever audiences wanted. Which characters in the novel perform, even when they are offstage? Why do you think they feel the need to perform? By contrast, what are moments in the book when characters show who they truly are?
- 8) Were you surprised by Kitty's final decision about the movie? Why or why not?
- 9) If the story had continued, what do you think the future would hold for Frances?
- 10) Do you have a favorite “old movie” from the 1930s or beyond? What do you like about it?