

FREE SPIRITS

BOOK CLUB QUESTIONS

1. Do you believe the Spirits appeared in Mr. Desmond's photographs? Why?
2. Should Mr. Desmond have been convicted of fraud? Why or why not?
3. Did Mr. Handiman mislead Ella? Why or why not?
4. Did Mrs. Thornton suffer any harm from the appearance of her brother in Mr. Desmond's photograph? Did Mrs. Crosby suffer any harm from the appearance of her dead daughter? Why or why not?
5. Was Ella able to call the Spirits? Did Charlotte's mother's Spirit speak through her? Why or why not?
6. Did Ella preserve her personal integrity in working with the Spirits? Was it ethical for her to draw on what she knew or heard about a client in advance of the séance? Why or why not?
7. Is there a Spirit you would call? What question would you ask (after 'are you happy?').
8. Do you think Rev. Beecher, Victoria Woodhull and Mr. Handiman mean the same thing by the term "free love"? Why or why not?
9. Should prostitution be legalized (and/or regulated) today? Is there a difference between being a mistress who is financially supported or extravagantly gifted and being a prostitute? Why or why not? (New York City at the time drew a distinction between street walkers and women in "gentlemen's clubs.")
10. What do you think of Mrs. Applewood's approach to "rescuing" "fallen women"?

11. Should U.S. marriage laws be revised with respect to the division of assets upon dissolution of a marriage? Is the alimony system fair? Why or why not?