

A PAIR OF WINGS

A NOVEL

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CAROLE HOPSON



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BY CAROLE HOPSON

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As you prepare to dive into this remarkable story, it's worth reflecting on the power of storytelling and its profound ability to connect us - not only to our own experiences but to the lives, dreams, and struggles of others. *A Pair of Wings* offers more than just a story; it is a testament to resilience, determination, and the undying pursuit of one's dreams against all odds.

This guide is designed to foster an engaging discussion, encourage deep reflection, and celebrate the journey of its characters. Whether you find yourself captivated by the historical context, inspired by Bessie Coleman's bravery, or intrigued by the challenges she faced, there is something in this story for everyone.

Please note: In order to provide book clubs with the most informed and thought provoking questions possible, it is necessary to reveal aspects of the story, as well as the ending. If you have not finished reading *A Pair of Wings*, you may want to wait before reviewing this guide.



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Bessie thrives in the big-city environment of Chicago, but her roots are in the open fields of Texas. How did her city and country experiences prepare her for her journey to France and Germany? In what ways do you think the comfort she finds in the sky is informed by the places in which she came of age?
2. What are the dynamics between Bessie and her brothers when she first moves to Chicago? What are the dynamics between Bessie and her sisters-in-law? How do these relationships shift over the course of Bessie's life? What outside factors do you think might be responsible for these shifts?
3. When Bessie first falls for Jesse Binga, she knows that there is a possibility he is already married. What is it about Jesse that allows her to look past this concern?
4. Though Bessie is fiercely independent and courageous, she also never shies away from asking for help when it will allow her to achieve her goals. Which figures stood out to you throughout the novel as Bessie's biggest helpers and supporters? What was it that motivated them to help her?

5. One of the constants throughout Bessie's adult life is her friendship with Norma. How does Bessie and Norma's friendship evolve over the course of the novel?
6. Bessie earned her pilot's license two years before Amelia Earhart, but Bessie's story was not as popularized as Amelia Earhart's. Why do you think this is? How does this make you feel?
7. At its core, Bessie's story is one of the Great Migration – though, of course, Bessie's travels didn't end when she arrived in Chicago. How are the hopes and dreams of the families that traveled north during the beginning of the 20th Century captured in Bessie's story?
8. Bessie achieved her dream of flying despite the odds of her race, her gender, and her economic status. In what ways do you think Bessie's challenges would be different if she had been born today? In what ways do you think it would be the same?
9. Although Bessie knew the risks associated with flying, her untimely death was still a shock to the nation. What do you think Bessie might have achieved if her life had been longer?
10. What makes Bessie's story so inspiring? What lessons can be applied from her life today?
11. What gave a Black woman of such modest means during the turn of the century the agency to do what she did? She branded herself before the concept of branding even had a name. How do you think Bessie found the courage to pursue what had never been done before?