

THE TRAITOR'S WIFE 10 Reading Group Questions

- 1) What must it be like for Martha, a strong, independent woman, to be a servant in her cousin's home?
- 2) Why is Martha so determined to gain the upper hand in her early dealings with Thomas and John?
- 3) Giving birth in the early colonies was often dangerous. Discuss what it must have been like for a woman at that time to be pregnant, lacking a proper diet and adequate medical care. Patience often behaves in a weak and ineffectual way. Does knowing about the perils of childbirth that she faced make you feel more compassion for her?
- 4) Just before Martha's encounter with the wolves, she remembers a poem recited by an elderly great-aunt. The last line is "it is not wolf, but man, and brings a maiden's death". Discuss what you think that passage means.
- 5) Wolves were a real threat in the early colonial wilderness. What do the wolves foreshadow beyond the coming of the assassins?
- 6) Martha carries a dark secret. At what point do you think Thomas intuits her painful past experiences?
- 7) When Martha discovers the scroll inside Thomas's trunk, a small piece of wood falls to the floor and "an aversion as strong as anything she had ever felt unfurled its way down her spine". Discuss whether you believe some people have the ability to sense past events through physical objects.
- 8) Brudloe tells the miller Asa Rogers that it can't be difficult to track down one colonial lout—meaning Thomas. The miller answers, "To find men of stature in this place, in this hard wilderness, one has only to stand on a Boston wharf and look westwards". Discuss the events that helped make the colonists so capable.
- 9) Martha's father tells her that he did not raise her to be liked, but rather to be "reckoned with". What do you think he means?
- 10) Often we think of the New World colonies as established on the eve of the American Revolution. History shows, however, that independent thought and action took root much earlier. Discuss ways in which the early spy rings of the colonial settlers aided the colonists' growing independence.